DAILY NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

THE TIMES

Tuesday August 18 2026 | thetimes.com | No 75114

£3.20 £2.35 to subscribers
(based on a 7 Day Print and Digital Subscription)

Would you let a partner track you? Jamie does

INSIDE TIMES2

How to improve your 5k run

Tweak to early release scheme could keep PC's killers in prison

Steven Swinford Political Editor

Ministers are considering plans to block the release of PC Andrew Harper's killers by barring all those who committed a type of manslaughter from being let out of jail early.

Andy Burnham has asked Alex Norris, the justice secretary, to come up with a "solution" to stop Albert Bowers and Jessie Cole from being freed under the government's early release scheme. He has said he was confident the government would be able to do so.

Harper, 28, was killed in 2019 after responding to a quad bike theft in Berkshire. The Thames Valley officer, who had got married four weeks earlier, was dragged for more than a mile at an average speed of 42.5mph after his ankle became caught in a strap trailing the getaway car.

Cole and Bowers, who were passengers in the car, were sentenced to 13 years each in July 2020 for "unlawful act manslaughter" because they were committing a crime which they knew could cause harm, even if it could not be proved they intended to kill the victim.

The judge said at the time: "Here death was caused in the course of an unlawful act which involved a deliberate and premeditated intention to drive, if accosted by the police, in a way which was reckless as to whether the police officers died or not ... and it killed Police Constable Harper."

The government is looking at exempting all those who committed "unlawful act" manslaughter from the early release scheme. It is likely to include most of the 470 people who are serving sentences for manslaughter and are eligible to be freed. Those who committed other forms of manslaughter, such as gross negligence or voluntary manslaughter, would still be released under the plans.

The government is preparing to

Continued on page 6

Children left 'fixated with violence' by social media

Report backs curbs to stop Southport-style attacks

Geraldine Scott Assistant Political Editor
Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor

British children are "becoming intoxicated by extremism", the children's commissioner for England has warned, as she called on the government to introduce a range of restrictions on social media use for under-18s.

Dame Rachel de Souza said that children who repeatedly talked about weapons, idolised violent attackers or shared videos of beheadings and suicides were routinely falling outside of counterterrorism measures.

A report, published by de Souza today, said children's safety experts were "deeply concerned that children are being drawn into radicalisation and violence fascination online", and the internet was "central" to the process.

The report recommended that the government impose measures on tech companies to prevent their access to children until they could demonstrate they were protected from harm.

De Souza said measures including curfews, bans on advertising, limits on scrolling and blocks on strangers contacting child users should be applied to social media, gaming platforms and AI chatbots.

Her comments put further pressure on the government to fulfil its pledge to ban social media for under-16s by spring 2027. Under the plans, announced in June, children aged 16 and 17 would have a curfew from midnight to 6am switched on, while the most addictive features would be switched off by default. These measures have been criticised by campaigners as older teenagers would be able to opt out by changing their account settings.

De Souza's intervention came as the Southport inquiry prepared to examine failures to stop Axel Rudakubana, who killed Alice da Silva Aguiar, Bebe King and Elsie Dot Stancombe at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class in 2024.

Rudakubana was referred to Prevent three times between December 2019 and April 2021 but counterterrorism officers took no further action after determining he had no obvious ideology or vulnerability to radicalisation.

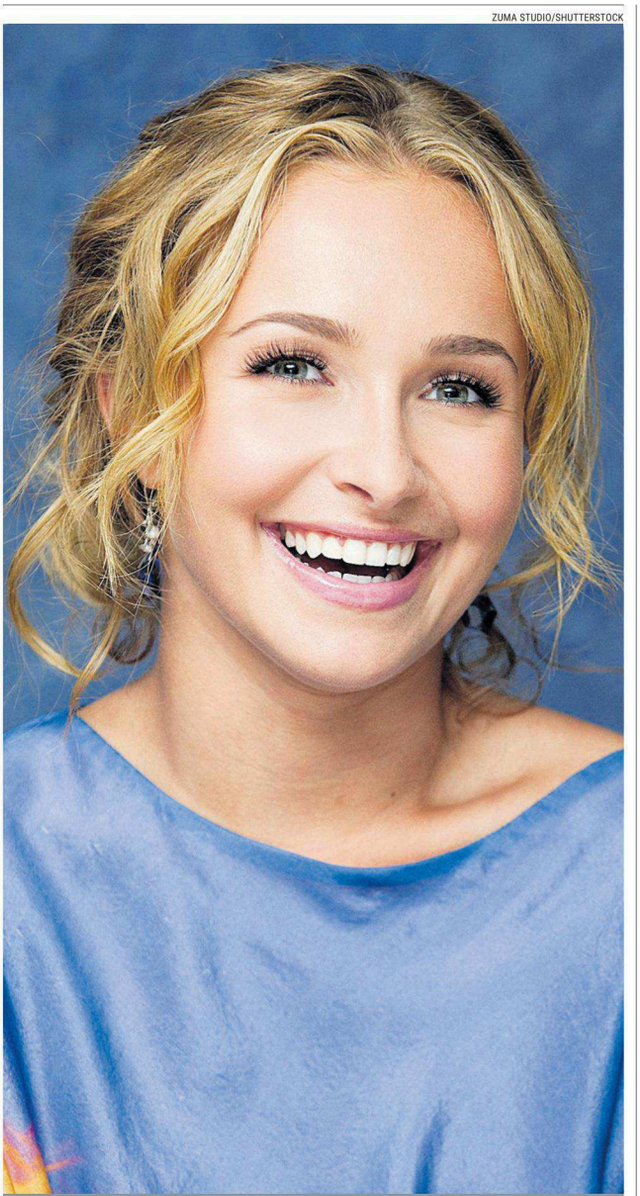
De Souza said: "It is clear that we have a cohort of children becoming intoxicated by extremism, radicalisation or a desire to harm others, who need interventions that Prevent is not able to provide ... that keeps me awake at night. I think about the victims, their loved ones, a town coming to terms with the trauma. But I also think about services which should have identified the risk and intervened to stop it but didn't."

De Souza's report found that Prevent referrals involving children rose from 2,918 in 2016-17 to 4,715 in 2024-25. Among those children, 71 per cent had no clear ideology such as left-wing, right-wing or Islamist extremism.

In many cases children instead frequently talked about weapons, idolised "famous" attackers or shared videos of violence such as beheadings or suicides. They may also share extreme

Continued on page 2

ZUMA STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK



Hayden Panettiere
1989-2026

The actress best known for roles in the TV shows Heroes and Nashville has died aged 36

News, page 9; obituary, page 44

High fidelity: music tastes may be key to compatibility

Rhys Blakely Science Editor

Forget dating apps, personality quizzes and shared values. If you're looking for love, finding someone with the same taste in music may be a much better bet.

A study has suggested that a shared fondness for a genre or particular artist can reveal far more about a couple's compatibility than whether they are both equally outgoing or organised.

To test the idea, a team led by Julia Vigl, of the University of Innsbruck in Austria, recruited 309 couples. All the participants listed their musical tastes as well as filling in personality and values questionnaires.

Vigl and her team then repeatedly shuffled the participants to create random "pseudo-couples". This allowed them to ask how much more alike the actual partners were than any two people paired together by chance.

For musical taste, the result was striking. Real couples were much more alike in what they listened to, on average, than people paired together at random. The researchers measured the size of the gap using "Cohen's d", a statistic that can signal how meaningful a difference is. For music, Cohen's d was 0.93, a large result for this kind of study.

For personal values it was 0.38, a much smaller difference. For personality it was just 0.08, a value so small it suggests real couples were barely more alike in character than the random pairings.

The study, in the journal Social Psychological and Personality Science, adds to decades of work on what draws romantic partners together.

Vigl and her colleagues suspected that musical preferences revealed things that personality tests miss. She stressed that the findings did not mean people with different musical tastes could not have successful relationships.

But her hunch was that musical preferences bundle together several clues at once — about a person's personality traits, emotional tendencies, values and, importantly, their background.

Food of love, leading article, page 23

News

Today's highlights

7am **Lilian Greenwood**, below, work and pensions minister
10.30am The theoretical physicist **Carlo Rovelli** discusses his book *85 Seconds to Midnight*
12.45pm **AN Wilson** on the history of protest art and public propaganda
1.30pm **Bob Weiner**, US Democratic strategist and political commentator
8pm **Professor Robert Pape**, White House war adviser and political scientist

DAB RADIO FREE APP 'PLAY TIMES RADIO'
TIMESRadio

TODAY'S EDITION

NEWS

RARE FIND
'Fox' head turns out to be extinct Tasmanian tiger
PAGE 18

WORLD

WHITE CLIFFS
Dumped marble creates a vast tourist attraction
PAGE 26

TIMES2

PANIC ATTACK
I know what's causing Gen Z's quarter-life crisis
PAGE 5

COMMENT 19
LETTERS 22
LEADING ARTICLES 23
WORLD 24
BUSINESS 29
REGISTER 43
SPORT 48
CROSSWORD 56
TV & RADIO TIMES2

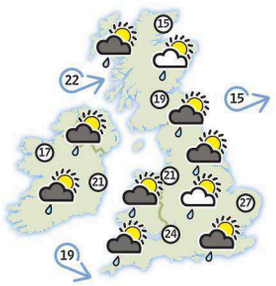
Investigation: On the line — the never-ending battle

Today we go inside Operation Titan, the push by North Yorkshire police to fight back against county lines drugs gangs. But with each line the police shut down, another pops up in its place, sometimes within days.

Available on the Times Radio app or wherever you get your podcasts

OFFER
Save up to 30% with a subscription to The Times and The Sunday Times
THETIMES.COM/SUBSCRIBE

THE WEATHER



Spells of rain and showers, heaviest in northwestern Scotland.
Full forecast, page 47

If a section of your Times is missing, please call 020-7711 1525 or e-mail help@timesplus.co.uk and we will send it to you, subject to availability.

©TIMES MEDIA LIMITED, 2026.
Published in print and all other derivative formats by Times Media Ltd, 1 London Bridge St, London, SE1 9GF; telephone 020 7782 5000.
Printed by Newsprinters Holdings Ltd, Great Cambridge Rd, Waltham Cross, EN8 8DY; Kitling Rd, Prescot, Merseyside, L34 9HN; and Byramsmuir Road, Holytown, Motherwell, ML1 1NP.
Webprint, 2023 Bianconi Avenue, Citywest Business Campus, Dublin, Ireland. KP Services, La Rue Martel, La Rue des Pres Trading Estate, St Saviour, Jersey, JE2 7QR.
For permission to copy articles or headlines for internal information purposes contact NLA media access at copy@nla.co.uk; telephone 01892 525273.
For all other reproduction and licensing inquiries contact Licensing Department, 1 London Bridge St, London, SE1 9GF; telephone 020 7711 7888; email enquiries@newslicensing.co.uk.

Virgin gets green light to end Eurostar's Channel monopoly

Laurence Sleator
Transport Correspondent

Eurostar is set to face competition for cross-Channel rail services for the first time after Virgin Trains was given the green light to use the tracks in the UK.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR), the regulator, has approved plans for Virgin to operate up to 20 daily return services between London and Paris, Brussels or Amsterdam from 2030.

Sir Richard Branson's train company had already secured the shared use with Eurostar of the Temple Mills depot for maintaining and storing its trains. Having depot space and a track agreement means the company has navigated two significant hurdles in establishing services to Europe.

Eurostar has had a monopoly on high-speed services through the Channel Tunnel since it opened in 1994. It currently runs at only 50 per cent capacity with about 30 services from London each day.

Virgin is finalising an order of 12 trains with the French manufacturer Alstom. It is in discussions with Getlink, the company that owns the Channel Tunnel, as well as the authorities in Europe to secure track access there. This is believed to be a more simple process. Branson has previously vowed to "shake up the cross-Channel route" and promised cheaper fares by bringing more competition.

Virgin Trains said: "Our plans for a new London-Europe rail service from 2030 are moving at pace. We welcome the ORR's pre-approval of our track access agreement."

When asked what passengers could expect, they said "we don't want to ruin the element of surprise" but added: "You can expect bold ideas with the customer experience front and centre."

Virgin is not the only company vying to run cross-Channel services. Gemini Trains, a British-based start-up, wants to run rival services to the French capital, including to Disneyland Paris and Paris-Charles de Gaulle airport, as well as to Cologne, with the aim of expanding to Frankfurt and Düsseldorf.

This month Trenitalia France confirmed an order for 19 high-speed trains as part of its plans to link Paris and London by 2029. These trains will be based at a depot in France.

Eurostar is also expanding. It has committed an investment of £1.7 billion for a fleet of double-decker Celestia trains and the first are due to be in service in 2031 to enable direct services from London to Frankfurt and Geneva.

However, questions remain over the capacity of London St Pancras station to handle more passengers using these services. The station is Grade I listed and therefore the authorities are limited in what they can do to expand, but plans have been devised to double its international capacity to 5,000 passengers an hour by optimising space.

A London St Pancras Highspeed representative said: "We welcome the Office of Rail and Road's decision to approve our framework track access agreement with Virgin.

"This is a significant milestone in opening up the next chapter of international high-speed rail. We look forward to working with Virgin as it progresses its plans to launch services."

Eurostar said: "This confirms the huge potential for growth in international rail and the ambition across the industry to bring more passengers to Europe by train.

"Eurostar will play a full part in that growth and our focus remains on delivering our own ambitious plans."

Grim up north? It's not if you're selling your house

Tom Howard Property Correspondent

Melton Mowbray and Falkirk share a history of vital contributions to quintessential elements of British life: one is famous for making pork pies, the other for manufacturing London buses and red phone boxes.

Their housing markets, however, are in wildly different places. In Falkirk, it is taking, on average, 11 days to find a buyer, while homes in the Melton district of Leicestershire are sitting on the market for seven times longer.

The data, from Zoopla, the property search website, is further evidence of a north-south divide in the UK's housing market that has widened since the first pandemic lockdown.

The ten fastest-moving housing markets are all in Scotland, whereas the ten slowest are all south of Melton.

In Westminster, London, and Teignbridge in Devon, houses are taking 63 days to sell.

The rise in mortgage rates since the Iran war has had a particularly marked effect on southern regions, where house prices are dearest and so homeowners tend to have larger mortgages.

Jason Honeyman, chief executive of the housebuilder Bellway, has said that "the noise from political events in Westminster is always louder in the south", whereas further north "there's apathy towards it".

On average in the UK, houses are on the market for 42 days before selling, which is roughly the same as a year ago. However, Richard Donnell, executive director at Zoopla, said that "stability is masking a real divide opening up between local markets".

Although there is a broad north-south divide, Donnell said there were sometimes marked differences between relatively close areas.

For example, in Melton it is taking 76 days to sell a home, which is six weeks longer than it takes in northwest Leicestershire, which is less than an hour away.

In Scotland, while it is taking just 11 days to find a buyer in Falkirk, in Aberdeenshire the figure is 45 days. Of the 11 regions in England, Scotland and Wales, six have differences of four weeks or more between their fastest and slowest-selling local markets.

In terms of regional hotspots, Zoopla's data shows that homes in Barnsley and Newcastle-under-Lyme are finding buyers almost two weeks more quickly this summer compared with last year.

Trump's 100% tariff threats 'not a bluff'

Max Kendix Washington

President Trump's threat to scrap a trade deal with Britain and impose 100 per cent tariffs is "not a bluff", the US trade tsar has warned.

Trump has repeatedly called on the UK to remove a tax on Big Tech companies, arguing it had been designed to discriminate against US firms. However, his most recent threat, made on social media in June, was not followed by action from his administration.

Jamieson Greer, the US trade representative, insisted the threats were "not a bluff". He told The Times that Britain was using American companies as "piggy banks", and that he was "not going to tolerate that".

However, Greer appeared to give some breathing space to Andy Burnham's government. He said he would not set "artificial timelines" when asked if there would be a deadline for Britain to scrap the digital services tax.

Greer said he had a good relationship with Jonathan Reynolds, who Burnham reappointed as business and trade secretary. He said: "We have very good relations with the UK."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Children 'fixated by violence'

pornography with peers and encourage others to join dangerous online communities or to self-harm.

De Souza said online platforms should be forced to assess the risk of radicalisation or violence fixation, including how algorithms contributed to a child's behaviour. The government pledged in May to introduce legislation to target people who shared footage showing extreme violence online.

Data also published in the report showed that most referrals of children to Prevent were sent back to schools and colleges. Nearly four in five referrals of children were closed without progressing through the programme.

One school safeguarding officer, highlighted in the report, said: "We referred him again then and it came back as 'doesn't meet threshold and it will not be provided on this programme'. We were not given an explanation."

There was little information about the mental health or neurodiversity of those referred to Prevent. Where conditions were recorded, autism accounted for 16 per cent of conditions in referrals, compared with an estimated prevalence of about 3 per cent among school-aged children. Rudakubana had an autism diagnosis.

One professional in the report said: "What they can't find in school, [children] find through ... a faceless online community, people there who are probably pretending they're teenagers and are not teenagers ... and they go down a sort of a rabbit hole."

The report said that "it is right that autism is neither seen as an 'excuse' for violent behaviour nor a reason for such behaviour", but that "autism may make a child more vulnerable to any form of exploitation, including radicalisation".

In July the government said it would make it mandatory for anyone referred to Prevent more than once to have their case assessed by counterterrorism police before the case can be closed.

A government spokesperson said: "We thank the children's commissioner for her report. We are reviewing it alongside our work in response to the Southport inquiry, including developing further options to manage those fascinated with extreme violence."

Scotland welcomes a new King James: NBA star LeBron

The novelist Sir Walter Scott may once have popularised the romantic beauty of the Highlands, but one of America's great sportsmen is proving the modern-day equivalent (Stuart MacDonald writes).

The basketball superstar LeBron James has described Scotland as "God's country" after reuniting with former Cleveland Cavaliers team-mates for cold plunges and a round of golf.

The NBA's all-time leading scorer who boasts more than 154 million Instagram followers, launched his own YouTube channel with a film of his recent golfing trip to the Highlands.

The group played golf at Castle Stuart, a renowned links course near Inverness, and stayed at the 400-year-old Aldourie Castle on the shores of Loch Ness, which is owned by Scotland's richest man, Anders Holch Povlsen.

The trip was to mark the anniversary of the Cavaliers' 2016 championship victory after one of the biggest comebacks in NBA finals history.

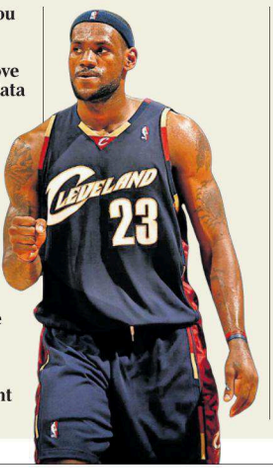
James, 41, used footage of the group playing golf and dining at the castle as the debut video on his new golfing YouTube channel. The venture will involve the American visiting some of the world's best courses.

"To be able to reunite with these guys and do a trip like this means everything to me and I know it means everything to the guys," he said. "I mean this is a beautiful place. It feels like God's country out here when you look around. I understand that golf is the overhead and the hub of this thing, but this brotherhood and this friendship we have, I don't take it for granted.

"It's pretty special having my guys around and being able to experience something like this here in Scotland, so I hope you all enjoy it too."

James is the latest American to fall in love with Scotland. New data from Goodlord, a property technology firm, found that the number of Americans renting properties in the country had risen 63 per cent since Donald Trump was re-elected in November 2024.

For those ill at ease with their country's political direction, Scotland's liberal outlook and irreverent sense of humour are appealing, the report said. Some are even trying to get British citizenship to make the move permanent.



LeBron James and former team-mates stayed at Aldourie Castle, on the shore of Loch Ness, for a trip documented on his golfing YouTube channel

James is a outspoken critic of Trump, famously calling him a "bum" and endorsed the president's Democrat opponent Kamala Harris in a video.

James, who was joined on the trip by Kevin Love, JR Smith, Richard Jefferson, Tristan Thompson and Channing Frye, also avoided playing at any of Trump's courses in South Ayrshire or Aberdeenshire. The group chose instead to fly more than 90 miles by helicopter for a round at Loch Lomond Golf Club.

Aldourie Castle was bought by Povlsen, a fashion tycoon, for £15 million in 2015. The estate boasts 12 luxury bedrooms, a grand banqueting hall, private cottages, a walled Victorian garden and its own marina. Povlsen was named as the richest person in Scotland for the fifth year in a row in this year's Sunday Times Rich List, with his fortune growing to an estimated £8.287 billion, up from £7.704 billion in 2025.

James, given the nickname "King James", has won four NBA championships from ten NBA finals appearances, including eight consecutive appearances between 2011 and 2018. He has also won three Olympic gold medals as a member of the US national team.

Stag shot dead after picnic attack

The deer was deemed a danger to visitors after injuring a man in his sixties in a royal park, **Ed Halford** reports

Deer have roamed freely around Richmond Park since it was established as a royal hunting ground by Charles I in 1637, the population thriving even as London grew over the centuries into the metropolis that it is today.

Despite the occasional encounter with a runaway pet dog, the wild animals have largely lived in harmony with their human neighbours. Signs warn visitors to the park not to feed, approach or touch the deer and by and large the rules have kept both species at a safe distance.

But on Saturday afternoon an incident that ended with tragic consequences has raised fears that people are increasingly ignoring the rules, leading to the deer losing "their natural wariness".

A stag had to be shot dead after it injured a man who was on a picnic. The animal had come close to the man's group "looking for food", a spokeswoman for Royal Parks told The Times.

The man, in his sixties, was taken to hospital with chest injuries described as "not life-threatening". The spokeswoman added: "Sadly, the stag's behaviour meant that it had to be put down as it was deemed to be a danger to visitors."

The incident is understood to have taken place close to the Roehampton Gate Café. Paramedics and an ambulance crew were called shortly after 6pm and dispatched to the scene.

Jeremy Calvert, who witnessed the scene during his evening cycle ride, said he saw about five police cars parked on grassland near the café. "The deer do roam all over the park but this is a slightly unusual place to see them — they are usually a bit deeper in the interior. It looked like a pretty serious incident based on the number of emergency vehicles there."

He said a large plastic sheet had been placed close to where the incident occurred, prompting speculation that a deer had been shot.

The park spokeswoman said: "Deer in Richmond Park are wild animals and should never be fed, approached or touched. Repeated feeding can cause deer to lose their natural wariness of people and seek out food from visitors, creating risks for both people and wildlife. If visitors follow our advice and do not feed or interfere with the deer, it is highly unlikely that they will exhibit this type of behaviour."

Richmond Park is home to more than 630 red and fallow deer. The incident has raised fear that they are "losing their natural wariness" as visitors ignore rules saying not to feed them or get too close

She added that Royal Parks staff were "shocked and alarmed to see that more videos and photographs are circulating online of park visitors feeding and approaching deer in Bushy Park, just days after we warned of the dangers of getting too close to the deer".

Last month, Paul Richards, the manager of Royal Parks, issued a public warning of the dangers of getting too close to deer after clips were posted online of visitors encouraging their children to pet and feed the animals.

He said: "This deeply irresponsible and highly dangerous behaviour will cause the deer stress and create a serious risk of a tragic accident resulting in life-changing injuries or, in the worst case, a fatal incident. Richmond Park's red and fallow deer are wild, powerful animals. Although they may appear calm, they can react suddenly and aggressively if they feel threatened."

Richmond Park, which is home to more than 630 red and fallow deer, has been without Royal Parks police since November, when the unit was disbanded due to Metropolitan Police cuts. Responsibility for the park now lies with local safer neighbourhood teams.

Sarah Olney, the Lib Dem MP for Richmond Park, suggested to The Times that cuts to the park's dedicated police coverage had increased the risk of such incidents. Sir Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, had refused what she described as "necessary" funding.

A spokesperson for the mayor said visitors to the capital's Royal Parks "should ensure they follow park guidance around wildlife, for their own safety and that of the animals". They added that the mayor's investment of £1.26 billion in the Metropolitan Police had "significantly [reduced] the level of cuts the Met had been planning".

TEMILADE ADELAJA/REUTERS

Heels over head Niuniu from China takes part in the Solo Men category of the UK B-Boy Championships World Breaking Finals at Aviva Studios in Manchester

‘Overqualified’ Afghan surgeon rejected for admin roles by NHS

Will Humphries
Southwest Correspondent

A former Afghan health minister granted asylum in Britain says he has been turned down for two NHS roles because he is “overqualified”.

Feroz Ferozuddin, 58, an internationally recognised trauma surgeon, was granted asylum in the UK last December after fleeing the Taliban and spent months in a migrant hotel.

He said he wants to offer his expertise to the NHS but has to wait at least two years to complete the necessary certification and registration requirements to become a physician.

In the meantime, he applied for two NHS administrative roles as he wanted to contribute straight away, but said he was not offered the jobs as he was told he was too experienced.

“I was told that I was overqualified for these roles,” Ferozuddin said. “My long-term plan is to build a new and stable life here in the UK, while staying connected to my professional experience and continuing to contribute to public health.

“I have spent most of my life working in healthcare and public service, so I would like to use that experience in whatever way I can — whether through teaching, research, consultancy or supporting organisations working to improve health services.”

Feroz Ferozuddin must wait at least two years to be certified to practise in the UK

Ferozuddin worked as a surgeon in Afghanistan for nine years before serving as the country’s minister for public health from 2015 to 2020.

He was awarded the best minister award at the World Government Summit in 2019 for his work on reducing the mortality rate for children under five by 44 per cent and increasing life expectancy at birth by seven years. His efforts to reduce maternal mortality and increase the immunisation of children against polio were also successful.

Ferozuddin was also a strong defender of women’s and children’s rights, which went against Taliban orders. When they took control of the country in 2021 his home was confiscated and his bank accounts were frozen.

He eventually escaped to Pakistan.

From there, he applied for asylum in Turkey but still felt unsafe. He said he continued to receive threats and was assaulted, and sought asylum in the UK in December 2024.

His original application to remain in the UK was refused as it was made after the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme (ACRS) closed. Ferozuddin was sent to live in one of Bournemouth’s three migrant hotels which were the scene of weekly protests staged by anti-migrant demonstrators.

He said it was a “very difficult experience” and it was an “enormous relief” to win his appeal for asylum status.

Ferozuddin suggested that not enough is being done to teach asylum seekers about British culture and the way of life here. He said: “Many asylum seekers were unfamiliar with everyday British customs and how communities function here. I think there was a missed opportunity.”

Ferozuddin’s wife and children are living in Canada, but he hopes they will be able to come to Britain to be reunited with him in the future.

He has been appointed patron of the local HealthBus charity, which provides specialist healthcare to homeless people in the Bournemouth area.

University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust were approached for comment.

Half of women don’t check breasts for signs of cancer

Eleanor Hayward Health Editor

Breast cancer cases are projected to rise by a quarter over the next decade, but research shows half of women do not regularly check their breasts for signs of the disease.

Two thirds of cases are found by women noticing lumps or changes, but research shows that the proportion checking their breasts regularly is falling. There are 59,000 new cases of breast cancer every year in the UK, and this is projected to rise to 70,300 every year by 2038 due to an ageing population and lifestyle factors such as obesity.

A YouGov survey of 2,282 women, commissioned by the charity Breast Cancer Now, found that 45 per cent check their breasts at least once every six weeks, down from 55 per cent in 2022. When breast cancer is found early, it is less likely to have spread, meaning treatment and survival chances are higher. The survey showed that younger women were less likely to be in the habit of regularly checking their breasts for signs of cancer, including lumps, dimples and nipple changes.

Novartis UK, a healthcare company, has begun a campaign with the England footballers Millie Bright, Jen Beattie and Bethany England to persuade women of all ages to check their breasts. One in six cases are in women under 50, and rates are increasing among younger adults, who also more likely to have a late diagnosis.

Manveet Basra, associate director of public health, inclusion and awareness at Breast Cancer Now, says: “Breast checking is a simple habit that can save your life, so it’s deeply concerning that less than half of women in the UK are regularly checking their breasts. The sooner breast cancer is diagnosed, the better the chances of treatment being successful, and of lives being saved.”

Quintagram® No 2649

Solve all five concise clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Peckish (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

2 One fishing with a rod and line (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

3 — City, comic-book hero’s home (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

4 Illustration (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 In honesty (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	A	A	C	E	E	F	G
G	G	H	H	I	K	L	L
M	N	N	N	O	P	R	R
R	R	T	T	U	U	Y	Y

Solutions see T2 MindGames p15
Cryptic clues T2 MindGames p14

Killer denies attack

Simon Levy has denied attacking a prison guard at Belmarsh prison in February while awaiting trial for rape and two murders, for which he is now serving a whole-life sentence. Levy, 41, is accused of stabbing the guard, Paul Dunne, with a pen and grabbing him around the throat. He will go on trial at Inner London crown court next month.

Free disabled bus travel

The government will spend £60 million, taken from existing budgets at the Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Transport, to give disabled bus pass holders free travel at any time from April next year, removing the existing restrictions that prevent free travel on weekends and between 11pm and 9.30am.

Eugenie baby named

Princess Eugenie has named her baby daughter Adelaide Elizabeth Annina Brooksbank. Her third child with Jack Brooksbank, her husband, was born in Lisbon, Portugal, on August 3. She was named after “people we love and admire, past and present”, among them her late great-grandmother, Queen Elizabeth. Adelaide will be 15th in line to the throne.

TIMESRadio
Breakfast: 6am to 10am
Our free radio station has all the latest headlines, interviews and debates every morning
Listen seven days a week
On DAB, app, website and smart speaker

‘Cry wolf’ fears over wildfire alert

Nick Ross, of the fire chiefs board, warned about overuse of the system, **Ben Cooke** and **Will Humphries** write

THOMAS HARDY/BNPS

The government should not have sent out an emergency alert about wildfire risk, the independent chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council’s board of trustees has said.

Nick Ross told Times Radio he nearly crashed his car when the alert sounded, and warned the government against overusing the system. Ministers have been told they risk creating a “cry wolf” effect, meaning the public could ignore the alerts in higher-level emergencies.

Ross, a former broadcaster who presented *Crimewatch* for 23 years, said that while in his official capacity he thought the alert was entirely appropriate, he added: “Personally, I don’t think it was appropriate to use that.”

He said: “I nearly crashed my car. I remember driving along [when] all of a sudden ‘wow, wow, wow’ — this extraordinary sound went off. I had no idea what was going on.”

The government sent out the alert on Friday evening at the request of the fire and rescue services who were tackling 43 fires, including 11 that were “significant” in size.

Ross suggested that last weekend’s wildfire risk was not the kind of danger the alert was designed for and would prompt “cry wolf accusations”. He said: “This is the sort of thing that I think is for an acute emergency ... That warning could have come any day, any time. So I think we’ve got to be very careful about overusing that.”

Fire chiefs across the country defended use of the alert. Phil Garrigan, chairman of the National Fire Chiefs Council, said it was helpful because “we were particularly stretched during that 24-hour period that preceded [it]” and fire services had seen a response to the alert from the public.

Jon Pryce, chief fire officer at Hereford and Worcester fire and rescue service, said unless people became more careful about starting fires in the open, the country could see repeats of the blazes that last week destroyed 19 homes in Stourbridge in the West Midlands. A spokeswoman for the prime minister said: “We took the decision to use the system after a direct request from fire and rescue services on the front line of the fight against wildfires.”

She added: “I would just reiterate that the first duty of government is to keep people safe, and that is why the alert was sent, and it was an entirely appropriate use of the system.”

The Times has been told that the Cabinet Office initially considered limiting the phone alert to areas where there were wildfires before opting for a nationwide message.

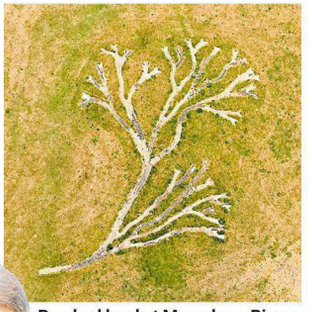
While many residents who fled the Stourbridge fires have been allowed to return home, firefighters and about 200 Gurkha soldiers continued to battle 14 blazes in south Wales.

The risk of further fires across southern England remains very high, according to the Met Office, although that risk is expected to subside in the coming days.

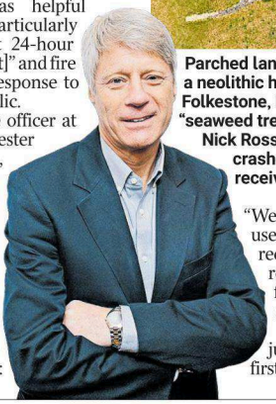
Separately, the prime minister is set to intervene to stop water companies from charging consumers higher prices during droughts after it was reported that Ofwat, the regulator, planned to allow firms to do so from April.

A Downing Street spokesman told The Daily Telegraph: “The prime minister has been clear that customers cannot be treated as a blank cheque, and we will always challenge water companies where they seek to pass unnecessary costs onto households.”

Nature’s suffering, letters, page 22
Full forecast, page 47



Parched land at Maumbury Rings, a neolithic henge in Dorset, and in Folkestone, Kent, which has a “seaweed tree” on the cliffs. Nick Ross said he nearly crashed his car when he received the wildfire alert



Scrap net zero and enjoy the weather, says Reform’s Tice

Constance Kampfner Political Correspondent
Ben Cooke Environment Correspondent

Reform UK’s deputy leader has said Britain should adapt to climate change, describing the push towards net zero as an “arrogant” attempt to halt it.

Richard Tice said people should enjoy the recent heat, which was making English wine “better and better”.

The UK’s record-breaking summer led to over a thousand wildfires and an estimated 2,900 heat-associated deaths. Asked at a Reform press conference whether climate change was real, Tice said it was, but added: “Where is the evidence that net zero is going to stop it? Where is the evidence? There isn’t any. Climate change has always happened — it always will. Maybe the smarter thing to do is to adapt to it than think arrogantly that you can stop it.”

He added: “I think when it is a bit warm, let’s enjoy it. And if it means that English wine and sparkling wine gets better and better — fantastic! That means we can take on the French — fantastic! Let’s celebrate some of these things, rather than just be sort of doom and gloom about it.”

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which collates the research of hundreds of scientists around the world, has found that humanity’s carbon emissions are “unequivocally” warming the planet. It said the planet would keep warming until carbon emissions reached net zero — the point at which any remaining pollution is balanced out by trees and machines that take carbon out of the air.

While the global average temperature has changed naturally throughout history, it has gone up by 1.4C since the start of the Industrial Revolution and is at its highest in 100,000 years.

Reform has proposed scrapping the UK’s legally binding target to reach net zero by 2050 and wants to end all public subsidies for renewable energy.

Reform’s benefits plan, page 8

Newlyweds killed in helicopter crash

Anthee Carassava Athens

A British couple on honeymoon and a pilot have died after their private helicopter crashed into a field and burst into flames just short of a heliport on a Greek island.

The aircraft crashed in the Tholos area of the Aegean island of Sifnos, igniting a fireball that engulfed the wreckage and scattered debris across the ground.

Police named the couple as Alexander Cromie and Marie Ebert, and the Greek pilot as Giorgos Raikos.

“The crash came minutes before the scheduled 18.15 landing,” a senior police official in Athens told The Times.

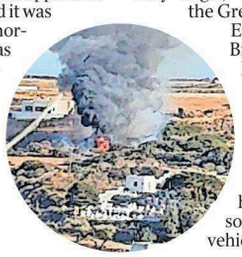
Firefighters were on the scene within minutes, while additional support was dispatched from the neighbouring island of Syros.

Greek aviation safety officials are examining flight records, weather conditions, and potential mechanical failure to determine what caused the aircraft to crash on its final approach.

The Foreign Office said it was in contact with the authorities in Greece and was ready to provide assistance to the victims’ families.

Manolis Foundoulakis, the deputy mayor of Sifnos, said residents spoke of a “bizarre engine noise coming from the aircraft” as it was about to land. Experts reviewing security camera footage from the helicopter pad suspect a mechanical malfunction and the complete loss of the tail rotor caused the crash. “It is truly tragic,” Foundoulakis told ERT, the Greek national broadcaster.

Earlier this month a British pilot, Andrew Hutchinson, 48, survived when two helicopters, which were both fighting the massive wildfires to the west of Athens, collided. Two people died on the first helicopter but Hutchinson survived by landing his vehicle without any rotors.



The crash scene on the Aegean island of Sifnos

Briton is charged in Nice with attempted murder

Charles Bremner Paris

A 49-year-old British man has been charged with attempted murder in Nice after an attack that left a 60-year-old woman critically injured.

The suspect was arrested by police after a neighbour intervened and overpowered him as he allegedly raped and stabbed the woman in her home just after midnight on Sunday.

The man, who has not been named, attracted attention last week by ringing doorbells in the southern French city late at night, presenting himself as a British tourist who had lost his money.

A police official said that when officers arrived, “the attacker was being held down by a neighbour who had heard the woman screaming inside an apartment block”.

The neighbour, Yuri Lebedev, 33, a Russian immigrant, said he heard someone shouting “stop, stop” from a flat across the courtyard at his apartment building on the Avenue Georges Clemenceau.

Police have not identified the victim. The attacker was also treated in hospital for injuries.

Confirming the attempted murder charge, prosecutors said the allegation of rape or attempted rape had yet to be established.

Fears over 'optics' may delay action on North Sea oil

Geraldine Scott
Assistant Political Editor
Steven Swinford Political Editor

Andy Burnham is expected to push a decision on two North Sea oil and gas projects into the autumn because of concerns about the "optics" of approving new drilling during a summer of heatwaves and wildfires, The Times has been told.

The consultation on the Rosebank oilfield closed yesterday, a week after one for the Jackdaw gasfield ended. Both decisions rest with Miatta Fahnbulleh, the energy secretary, and Burnham.

The Times has been told that the government wants time to look at the responses but also that there are concerns about the "optics" of making the announcement after successive heatwaves. Sources said they still expected Jackdaw to be approved but added that Burnham could resist calls to allow Rosebank to proceed because of opposition from Labour MPs.

The Times understands a decision is expected next month.

Any approval would risk a showdown with backbenchers after the prime minister suggested faster extraction of North Sea oil and gas could help to fund Britain's transition to clean energy.

A No 10 spokeswoman said: "The decisions on Rosebank and Jackdaw will be taken by the energy secretary through a quasi-judicial process." She added: "[Fahnbulleh] will consider the relevant evidence, including environmental assessments and representations received during the consultation process before reaching a decision."

Burnham said last week that accelerating the use of oil and gas could help to pay for the transition to green energy. He said: "We won't be able to stop using oil and gas for some time, that's just a fact. The question is ... whether that extraction can be the bridge to the clean energy future we need."

He is understood to believe that oil and gas production can continue to support jobs, investment and tax revenues and goes "hand in hand" with the transition to clean energy.

Fahnbulleh has also said the government must be pragmatic and made her first visit as secretary of state to Aberdeen to visit oil and gas workers.

Labour's 2024 manifesto promised not to issue licences to explore new fields in the North Sea. Rosebank and Jackdaw already had licences but still required development consent before production could begin. Both projects had been approved by the previous Conservative government, but the decisions were quashed after a legal challenge by Greenpeace.

Adura, the company behind both projects, said they would generate £10.8 billion of investment, with more than three quarters expected to be spent in Britain. It said they could support 3,500 jobs at the peak of construction.

Rosebank, about 80 miles northwest of Shetland, is Britain's largest undeveloped oil field and is expected to produce about 69,000 barrels a day at its peak. Adura said the two projects together could provide about 10 per cent of domestic gas production.

But environmental campaigners claimed Rosebank would produce more than 250 million tonnes of carbon dioxide over its lifetime, equivalent to about 70 per cent of Britain's annual emissions. Robert Palmer, deputy director of Uplift, said: "While the oil and gas industry does everything in its power to push Burnham into Trump's drill baby, drill agenda, the nation's new prime minister has watched the UK and Europe burn baby, burn."

A spokesman for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero said: "The North Sea remains a vital national asset, supporting jobs, growth and the UK's energy security. We are clear that oil and gas will continue to play an important role in our energy system for decades to come, alongside transitioning to clean power to protect jobs and tackle the climate crisis."

Traveller sites 'made harder to challenge'

Aubrey Allegretti
Chief Political Correspondent

Angela Rayner has been accused of changing planning rules to make it harder for residents to oppose retrospective applications for unauthorised Traveller sites.

The housing secretary published new regulations yesterday to speed up housebuilding and encourage responsible development.

However, previous guidance that warned against environmental damage caused by unauthorised Traveller sites was removed from the updated National Planning Policy Framework.

Documents accompanying the 2024 version said that proposals for development of Traveller sites should provide a settled base "that limits the need for long-distance travelling and potential environmental damage caused by unauthorised encampment". However, this wording was not included in the updated plan.

The Conservatives claimed that the change would make it harder for councils to challenge and deny applications for Traveller sites that are submitted late, after an encampment has been set up.

However, a government source pointed to changes that said "substantial weight" should be given to the consideration that unauthorised development was intentional in a retrospective planning application.

Tories would ease rules on jobs for teenagers

Geraldine Scott Assistant Political Editor

Teenagers would be allowed to work until midnight at weekends and not have to take as many days off between shifts under Conservative plans designed to revive summer jobs.

The Tories said they would relax employment rules for 16 and 17-year-olds, meaning those in full-time education or training could work until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays during term time and without restrictions during school holidays.

Alan Milburn, the government's work tsar, has previously criticised the decline of the Saturday job, which he said "helped young people build confidence, learn the habits of work and show employers what they could do". Fewer than one in five 16 and 17-year-olds are in work, compared with nearly half at the start of the century.

The Conservatives said the restrictions were inherited from the European Union's working time directive and described their repeal as a benefit of Brexit. Andrew Griffith, the shadow business secretary, said: "A generation of young people risk being locked out of work because of unnecessary red tape, higher taxes and economic uncertainty. Simplifying rules about when young people can work and take breaks will help save the summer job and give employers the confidence they need to hire a young person."

The policy would also mean young people would not be required to take 48 hours off between shifts in a week, reducing the period to 24 hours, while 16 and 17-year-olds would be allowed to take their breaks "at any point" during their shifts. Current laws mean workers aged 16 to 17 must take a 30-minute break per four and a half hours of work.

The law says young people should not work between 10pm and 6am, or between 11pm and 7am, depending on their contracts. The Conservatives said getting rid of this law would allow young people to work clearing up after pubs and bars have shut.

The measures were backed by Kate Nicholls, the chair of the trade body UK Hospitality. Nicholls said 60 per cent of first jobs were in the sector and "we give so many young people their first step on the career ladder". She said: "These sensible reforms will remove unnecessary barriers for businesses and give young people the opportunity to learn new skills and gain the confidence that comes with a first job."

Over the weekend the British Retail Consortium urged Andy Burnham to make it easier to employ young people. Helen Dickinson, its chief executive, said: "For generations, Saturday jobs have given young people their first experience of work, helping them build confidence, develop new skills and take the first step in their careers. Retail has proudly provided these opportunities for millions of people, but they are becoming harder to sustain."

Milburn, the former Labour health secretary who is leading a review into so-called Neets — young people not in education, employment or training — told The Times this year that the decline of the Saturday job meant young people were no longer ready for work. He said: "It's too lazy to just blame today's youngsters for not being work-ready. Over many years those opportunities for young people have been in sharp decline."

More than one million young people aged 16 to 24 were not in work, education or employment as of March.

A Labour spokesperson said the Tory policy was "dressing up giving young people fewer protections at work as 'flexibility', while doing nothing to tackle the real barriers they face".

Plan to keep police officer's killers in jail

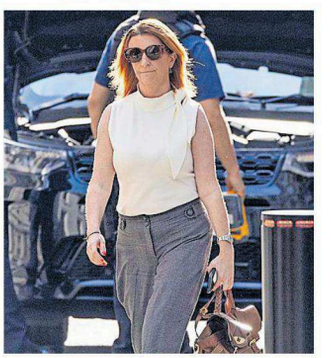
Continued from page 1

release 5,000 criminals early over a period of ten months from October to free up places and ease pressure on overcrowded jails. It will include serious and violent offenders.

This month Burnham appeared to concede that he could not exempt the two men from the early release scheme, saying that he had pushed to the "very limits of what is possible".

However, after he returned from holiday he said he had directed Norris to find a way to stop the release of Bowers and Cole. He said it was "incumbent" on him to do "everything in my power" to minimise the possibility of the two men being released.

GREENPEACE/COVER IMAGES; DANIEL CLAYTON/MHCLG; JAMES COOK/STORY PICTURE AGENCY; TAYFUN SALCI;



Activists paint a message to Andy Burnham on a scorched hillside in north Wales; Angela Rayner visits families affected by the Stourbridge wildfires; protests outside the Treasury against the Rosebank oil field; the Cabinet Office minister Louise Haigh in Downing Street

Burnham 'is too happy on TikTok to tackle Big Tech'

David Sanderson

Andy Burnham may be too "happy-clappy on TikTok" to tackle the powers of the big technology companies, Britain's pre-eminent "scourge of Big Tech" has warned.

Baroness Kidron, the crossbench peer and digital rights campaigner, said she feared that the new prime minister could be too seduced by the power of social media platforms to tackle the might of the companies behind them.

Kidron said that despite his frequent deployment of social media, Burnham had been quiet so far on how governments should legislate to protect children from online harms and resist lobbying pressure from Big Tech.

The crossbench peer told Edinburgh International Book Festival that politicians were "a bit untrustworthy in relation to social media and tech", adding: "They see it as a weapon that can be used for, or against, their own interests and that's a problem."

Kidron said she had been surprised by Burnham's adeptness at social media, saying that even a Labour-sceptic relative had been wooed by the prime minister.

She said the jury was still out on whether Burnham would be able and willing to tackle perceived threats from Big Tech.

"My concern is that he doesn't talk about tech very much and he uses it quite a lot," Kidron said, adding that he was "Mr Happy-Clappy in his TikTok videos".

"I was with my mother-in-law last week and within three weeks of Andy Burnham becoming prime minister he had made her friends on Facebook.

"I thought that was bloody impressive because she's not a natural ally. She said she would never vote Labour again because of the winter fuel tax.

"So, somehow, he is using the technology," she said. Kidron said, however, that Burnham needed to have the confidence to say "boo to the Big Tech boys" and introduce legislation to tackle social media harms to children.

The former film director was speaking at the festival on a platform with Sarah Wynn-Williams, the Meta whistleblower.

Wynn-Williams — whose memoir *Careless People* chronicles her years between 2011 and 2017 as a senior executive with Meta, which operates Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp — is prevented by a legal ruling in the United States from promoting the book. Earlier this year she sat in silence on stage at the Hay Festival owing to Meta's legal threats.

Her book claims, for example, that Facebook had used algorithms to assist advertisers to target vulnerable teenagers. Meta has previously said it does not and has not "offered tools to target people based on their emotional state".

Wynn-Williams's appearance at the festival was dependent on her memoir not being available for sale at the venue.

The oddities of the situation were summed up in one exchange when Wynn-Williams, a New Zealand diplomat before being employed by Facebook as its global public policy director, began to question how many British politicians ended up working for Big Tech companies.

She mentioned that British politicians were working for technology companies, including the former prime minister Rishi Sunak, who was employed as an adviser with Microsoft and Anthropic.

Kidron mentioned that the former deputy prime minister Nick Clegg had been a senior executive at Meta.

At this point, Wynn-Williams began to say she could not talk about him despite Clegg not having even joined Meta until after she had left.

Kidron told the festival that the silence of Wynn-Williams would be "temporary", adding that she was "proud to share a stage" with her.

The prime minister is skilled in social media

PM fooled by a phoney Trump aide

Geraldine Scott

Andy Burnham exchanged messages with an impostor posing as President Trump's chief of staff after entering Downing Street.

The prime minister sent several messages to someone he believed to be Susie Wiles, one of the US president's most senior aides.

The exchanges, first reported by Politico, began before Burnham became prime minister and continued after he took office on July 20.

One source described them as being "of no significance" and No 10 would not say whether any sensitive information had been disclosed.

A spokesman said: "We do not comment on national security matters."

The Federal Bureau of Investigation began investigating an attempt to impersonate Wiles last year after senators, governors and leading business figures received messages and telephone calls from someone claiming to be Trump's chief of staff.

Wiles was reported to have told colleagues that contacts stored on her personal phone had been compromised.

Some suspected artificial intelligence had been used to replicate Wiles's voice and the imposter was also said to have asked one politician for a list of potential presidential pardons and a contact to transfer money. Trump said at the time: "Nobody can impersonate Susie. There's only one Susie."

British government officials were concerned that Wiles may have been hacked and the UK embassy in Washington raised it with the White House, according to Politico.

Last night it emerged that at least three UK cabinet ministers have had their personal mobile phone numbers published online, amid rising concern over the security of senior politicians.

Wes Streeting, the defence secretary, Alex Norris, the justice secretary, and Chris Bryant, the Northern Ireland secretary, had their numbers available online with their names, according to The Guardian.

Burnham was not the first prime minister to be contacted by someone using a false identity. In 1998 Tony Blair received a call from the impressionist Jon Culshaw, who pretended to be William Hague. Blair realised it was a hoax after the caller addressed him as "Tony" rather than "prime minister".

In 2015 a hoax caller posing as Robert Hannigan, the head of GCHQ, persuaded the Downing Street switchboard to connect him to David Cameron's phone while he was on a family walk in Oxfordshire. Cameron became suspicious because he did not recognise Hannigan's voice and ended the conversation.

Ministry of Justice officials have warned that it is not possible to secure a carve-out solely for Bowers and Cole because it would be subject to legal challenge. As a result they have come up with plans to exempt all those who committed unlawful act manslaughter.

No final decision has been taken, and Norris has until parliament returns in September to draw up his plan.

Sir Robert Buckland, a former Tory justice secretary, said that the new approach could still be subject to legal challenge. He said: "They are in danger of creating more exemptions, other cases will inevitably emerge. They are going to check the files for each case to make sure the facts amount to unlawful manslaughter. The devil will be in the administrative basis of the work."

Debbie Adlam, PC Harper's mother, urged Burnham not to "let us down again". She told GB News last week that Downing Street had called to inform her about the prime minister's change of position on the release of her son's killers. She said she was now in a "limbo of hope again".

She said: "[I would say to Andy Burnham] really just to not let us down again because we've had so many ups and downs, and is it going to be that we've got to get our heads around this release being early?"

The Ministry of Justice said: "Public safety will always be our priority. We are fast-tracking a plan to keep more of the most serious offenders behind bars, on top of murderers, anyone on life sentences and those in prison for rape, serious child sexual abuse and grooming offences who are already blocked from any changes.

"We share the public's anger that these options are even being considered, after we inherited a prison system on the brink of collapse.

"We are fixing this by building 14,000 new prison places, expanding electronic tagging and investing in probation services at record levels. We are also exploring how we can go further, including faster deportation of foreign criminals, better use of the women's estate and reviewing the unjust IPP [imprisonment for public protection] sentences."

Reform: We'll end benefits 'joke'

Constance Kampfner
Political Correspondent

Long-term benefits claimants will be made to clean up their local park and staff libraries or risk being stripped of welfare payments under Reform UK, the party said.

Under the policy, designed to stop people from "taking advantage" of their tax-paying neighbours, claimants who are fit to work will be forced to do 20 hours a week of community work.

It is one of a raft of measures to overhaul the welfare system announced by the party in a 50-page plan that it claims will save the Treasury a total of £50 billion a year. Other proposals include stopping foreign citizens from claiming benefits and abolishing the personal independence payments (Pip) system in its present form for working-age people.

Robert Jenrick, Reform's finance spokesman, told a press conference yesterday that the principles behind the modern welfare state built by William Beveridge had been undermined, adding that the average tax burden for each family was on track to reach £7,000 by 2031. "What was a source of pride for British people, a marker that we all live in a civilised society, has become viewed by many people as a joke," he told the event in central London. He added that a Reform government would stop "those taking everyone else for mugs".

Jenrick, a former Conservative minister, said that councils would be responsible for implementing "work placements" for long-term benefits claimants, with those that failed to do so risking cuts to their funding. He said that the unemployed would work to clean up high streets and parks, carry out minor repairs, staff libraries and community centres, and "perform many other tasks from the list that we've published today".

Jenrick added: "If claimants refuse to participate or fail to show up, they'll face penalties. Let me speak very plainly. If people who are capable of work refuse, then they'll get nothing. That's fair."

Reform also pledged to create a new system of "return to work cover", which Jenrick said would cut disability claims by 40 per cent. Under the scheme, firms would pay for any employees off sick for the first two years of their absence. Businesses with more than five employees would have to take out insurance to cover the cost.

"Employers' national insurance contributions will be cut nationally to offset those costs, giving the employers who know their workers best an incentive: firstly to look after them well when they are in work, and then to help them back into work if they are off sick, rather than just passing the bill to the taxpayer and forgetting about their workers," he said.

Jenrick also described paying benefits to non-British citizens as "plain immoral", with one in six universal credit claimants not a British or Irish citizen. He said a Reform ban on foreign citizens claiming benefits would include EU citizens with settled status in the UK. He accepted that this would mean renegotiating the Brexit deal.

Reform's plan also includes a £500 million contingency for British citizens living in the EU returning to the UK if they lose their equivalent rights in response to the changes.

The party said that the policy would save £21 billion a year by its fifth year, but Labour argued that the "vast majority" of migrants already had no access to benefits.

A Labour spokesman said: "These plans would mean ripping up the UK's withdrawal agreement with the EU, plunging the UK back into years of Brexit renegotiations and stripping support from potentially millions of people who have lawfully lived, worked and paid taxes in Britain for years, and in many cases decades."

Reform estimates that 2.89 million people would have their disability payments removed or changed under plans to abolish Pip in favour of a "health security allowance". Only the most "severe, enduring and high-risk cases" would receive cash support, it said.

Other proposed changes by Reform include reforming child disability living allowance and the reinstatement of the two-child benefit cap. The Conservative Party dismissed the plans as "cobbled together" and said that only it had a "credible plan to save £23 billion from welfare alongside our root-and-branch review of sickness benefits". The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) said that stripping benefits from foreign citizens risked "significant increases in hardship", with some of this group receiving most or all of their income from benefits at present. Those who have settled status may also apply to become citizens in response to the reforms, which could reduce savings, the research institute it pointed out.

The IFS also said that the tougher disability benefits system envisaged by Reform lacked detail "on what the new assessment would actually entail or on how they would avoid the experience of previous attempts to toughen up the system, which saw savings falling significantly short of expectations".

Reform's plan is stronger on headlines than savings, leading article, page 23

STEFAN ROUSSEAU/PA

Robert Jenrick, Reform UK's finance spokesman, and Richard Tice, its deputy leader, set out plans in London to make long-term claimants help to clean up parks

Jenrick is targeting migrants, but welfare axe will fall on his voters

Fraser Nelson
Comment

Welfare reform was always going to be dangerous policy for Reform UK. Its instinct is to be the party of "alarm clock Britain" — the workers, not the shirkers.

But the Reform vote is strongest in the areas most dependent on benefits. How to square this circle? How hard can Nigel Farage go?

Robert Jenrick shared the plan yesterday, and it's ambitious. He would save £50 billion a year, he said, more than twice what the Tories proposed. That is an extraordinary share of the £178 billion cost of out-of-work welfare. So how can the figures stack up? Removing welfare from foreign nationals is the headline, but most don't qualify for benefits. A UK visa comes with a condition: no recourse to public funds.

Welfare is paid only to foreign nationals who have stayed at least five years and been granted the coveted indefinite leave to remain.

Almost all of those with this status qualify for a British passport but it makes no financial difference, so many don't take this final step. Those Reform is targeting can escape by accepting the standing offer of naturalisation. But as things stand, Jenrick said, "one fifth of universal credit claimants are not British. Just imagine what we can do with that money."

It is in fact closer to one in six, and most are citizens of EU countries who qualify for full benefits here, just as the 1.3 million Britons living in the EU qualify for full benefits in their host countries as part of a reciprocal deal agreed after Brexit.

Strip out these citizens of EU countries and only 2.6 per cent of universal credit claimants are non-EU foreign nationals with indefinite leave to remain. The surge in welfare spending is being driven by sickness benefits among Britons.

Reform certainly intends to address this. The full document, published after journalists had left the room, shows that £22 billion of its savings will come from reforming personal independence payments (Pip). The small print suggests that under Reform's system, about half of today's claimants would receive next to nothing. Cuts would be deepest, Jenrick said, where Pip has grown fastest — particularly among mental health claimants. It's a bold plan, especially as this points squarely to Reform's existing seats and those it would target at the next election. Labour's Pip cuts were abandoned when backbenchers worked out that the number of claimants in their constituencies exceeded their majority.

How many Pip claimants are in Jenrick's seat of Newark? 6,010. What was his majority when he stood as a Tory? 3,571. Richard Tice, standing beside Jenrick as they announced the crackdown, can count 10,600 Pip claimants in his Skegness constituency, which he won with a majority of 2,000.

Had Jenrick's plan been announced last week, Farage would have faced hard questions from the 10,440 Pip claimants in Clacton, who receive an average tax-free sum of £7,400 a year. Of these, 3,850 are claiming for mental health, which Jenrick said yesterday was "not sensible" and "not sustainable".

Many in Westminster would agree. But would Farage have wanted to fight Clacton with this policy?

Internally, some Reform strategists say their core voters are workers in high-welfare areas that don't claim benefits and resent those who do. But others say the data is never quite clear, and they risk being attacked by Labour as the Pip-snatchers.

"No other party has had the guts and the imagination to get on to this," Jenrick said. He's right in that all parties know this needs to change, but none have worked out how to cut Pip and still be elected.

Reform has the policy, but the real test will be whether it can handle the backlash, which may not be long in coming.

Casting black 007 'would be as wrong as having white BA Baracus'

Alex Farber Media Correspondent

The next James Bond must be a white actor from the British Isles, according to the leading black actor Nicholas Pinnock, who urged studio bosses against "ticking a box" when casting the spy.

Pinnock, who will star in the new Sky boxing drama *Fightland*, said that "some roles need to stay as they are" as he compared 007 to *The A-Team*'s BA Baracus, played by Mr T.

"There are some roles that need to stay as they are," Pinnock told Radio Times. "If [BA Baracus] were to change into someone of European descent tomorrow, there would be absolute outrage. And I can understand why, because he's an iconic figure."

Studio bosses have promised that they will decide which actor will succeed Daniel Craig before the end of the year. Amy Pascal, who is producing the next iteration for Amazon MGM Studios, said this month that it would be someone "stirring and exciting".

Pinnock, 52, advised producers against deviating from the "classic" Bond mould. "I grew up with James Bond looking and acting a certain way. I don't want it to change. You go to watch a James Bond movie, you know that James Bond's going to be this English, Scottish or Irish guy with a slick accent, with kick-arse moves, who gets all the ladies," he said. "Great! I want him to stay like that. I don't think changing him and ticking a box is the answer."

Pinnock said that he would instead like studio executives to pour a Bond-sized amount of investment into creating new characters from minority backgrounds.

"If they put posters up tomorrow saying '008' in the same font, everybody would be at the cinema, they wouldn't question it and they would love it," he said. "And it could be me. It could be Idris Elba, it could be Dev Patel. It could be anybody of non-European descent and it would be amazing."

Elba, 53, has ruled himself out of the running to play Bond. He said that some international markets would not accept a black actor in the role. "Bond is big all over the world. And [audiences] won't [all] go for a black male, an African male, playing Bond," he said. "That's not what they like in their culture. Period."

The odds have shortened on the *Slow Horses* star Jack Lowden after he was named as a contender last week. Richard Osman, the author and presenter of *The Rest is Entertainment* podcast, said that Lowden was being "seriously considered".

Jacob Elordi and Callum Turner are also said to be in the frame, along with Aaron Taylor-Johnson and Harris Dickinson. Production on the next Bond film is expected to start next year, to be released in 2028. It will be directed by Denis Villeneuve and written by the *Peaky Blinders* creator Steven Knight.

All but two of the actors to have played Bond in the official movies have been British. Brosnan was born in Drogheda, Ireland, while George Lazenby, who starred in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* in 1969, is Australian.

Gangster had Tupac killed, trial is told 30 years on

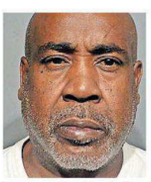
Keiran Southern Los Angeles

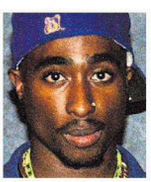
A former California gang leader orchestrated the 1996 shooting of Tupac Shakur in revenge after the superstar rapper assaulted his nephew, a court has been told.

Duane "Keffe D" Davis, 63, is on trial in Las Vegas where he is charged with the murder of Shakur, who was killed aged 25 when he was one of the biggest names in rap music.

The unsolved murder spawned innumerable conspiracy theories and competing versions of what happened on the night of September 7, 1996, after a Mike Tyson heavyweight title fight.

Davis was arrested in 2023 after the release of a memoir in which he described his role in the shooting. His lawyers say he lied about the incident to sell books and Davis, who faces life in prison if convicted, has pleaded not guilty.





Duane Davis, left, denies murdering the rapper Tupac Shakur in the 1990s

During opening statements yesterday, prosecutors said that Davis ordered Shakur's murder after the rapper and his entourage assaulted his nephew, Orlando "Baby Lane" Anderson.

The chief deputy district attorney, Binu Palal, said: "Duane Davis did not pull the trigger. But what he did do was plan the retaliation for the beating of his nephew. You will learn that Duane Davis got the gun. You will learn that he got into a white Cadillac. You will learn when the opportunity presented itself for retribution, Duane Davis made sure that the shooters were armed and ready to execute their revenge. And remarkably, you will learn that from Duane Davis himself."

Palal said that to fully understand the case it was important to learn about the gangs operating on the east and west coasts that were linked to leading rap record labels. Compton, in Los Angeles, was said to have been a hotbed of gang activity in the 1990s and the Mob Piru and South Side Compton Crips were among the most prominent gangs. Mob Piru was deeply entwined with Death Row Records, Shakur's label, which was founded by Suge Knight, who was with Shakur in a BMW when he was shot.

Davis was a leader of the South Side Compton Crips, a "large-scale drug trafficker" and had served as security for Bad Boy Records, founded by the rapper Sean "Diddy" Combs, the court was told. Christopher Wallace, the rapper better known as Notorious BIG, was signed to Bad Boy Records and was a hated rival of Shakur. Wallace was shot dead in Los Angeles in 1997.

Palal said that Shakur's murder could be traced to a gang fight in the summer of 1996, when Trevon Lane, who was with the Mob Piru, clashed with Anderson and his Crips at a mall. The groups met again after the Tyson fight in Las Vegas. CCTV showed a group including Shakur and Lane attacking Anderson.

Davis heard about the beating and began planning his revenge. "In his world, there is no question that a response is required," Palal said.

Davis organised two vehicles to drive to a nightclub for a planned ambush of Shakur only for the musician not to turn up. The alleged gunmen, driving to a liquor store, then spotted Shakur's BMW.

The court was played an audio recording of Davis describing the moment they saw their target. Davis passed the gun to the back seat, before Anderson fired at the BMW, according to Palal. The Cadillac sped away and was never recovered. Shakur was fatally wounded and died six days later.

Davis and his lawyers tried to have his 2019 memoir, *Compton Street Legend*, made inadmissible at trial but the judge ruled it could feature. In his opening statement Michael Sanft, for the defence, said jurors should take no notice to Davis's book because he was known to spread "bullshit". The trial is scheduled to last for at least four weeks.

VENTURELLI/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

Hayden Panettiere with the Ukrainian heavyweight boxer Wladimir Klitschko, with whom she had a daughter; she suffered from postnatal depression

Actress was found after 911 call for 'overdose'

Hayden Panettiere, the actress known for her roles in the television series *Heroes* and *Nashville*, has died aged 36 after being found unresponsive at an apartment in South Carolina (Keiran Southern writes).

Panettiere, who had suffered from depression and drug addiction, was pronounced dead on Sunday afternoon, with a 911 call referring to a potential "overdose".

The county coroner's office said yesterday that a cause of death had yet to be officially determined. An autopsy was completed and "no signs of trauma were discovered that would have contributed to the death", officials said.

TMZ, the showbusiness website, reported that Panettiere was found unresponsive at an apartment linked to her sometime boyfriend Brian Hickerson.

The website said that Narcan, the nasal spray used to reverse opioid overdoses, was discovered at the residence.

The death of Panettiere, a former child star, prompted tributes from across Hollywood.

Viola Davis, who starred alongside Panettiere in the 2016 drama *Custody*, described her as an "amazing talent".

Melissa Barrera, her *Scream VI* co-star, wrote on Instagram: "Rest in peace sweet Hayden."

Bryan Fuller, who wrote her character's storyline in the first season of *Heroes*, said she was "more than an actress, she was a muse".

He added: "Wise beyond her years and already saddled with so much of a life, she left an indelible mark on me as a writer and a storyteller."

Her father, Skip Panettiere, said: "She was an incredible light and a force of nature who brought immeasurable love and joy to all who knew her — and to the millions who watched her on screen."

Panettiere started out in showbusiness appearing in soap operas. After roles in films including *A Bug's Life*, her big break came at the age of 16 in *Heroes*. She played Claire Bennet, a high school cheerleader with superpowers, but there was a dark side to her growing stardom.

Panettiere said that while she was promoting *Heroes*, a member of her team gave her a pill to boost her energy for interviews. She later believed it was an amphetamine.

As well as *Heroes* and the *Scream* horror films, she was arguably best known for *Nashville*, in which she played a troubled country music singer for six series.

In 2009 she met the heavyweight boxing champion Wladimir Klitschko and they had a daughter in 2014. Panettiere signed over full custody of the girl to Klitschko in 2018. She had suffered from postpartum depression.

Panettiere's brother, who had also struggled with drug problems, died in 2023 aged 28.

Obituary, page 44

News

Greens' group chat: Wipe Israel off map

Geraldine Scott Assistant Political Editor

Green Party activists claimed British Jews were a "weapon" of Israel and described hostility towards Jews as "understandable", leaked messages show.

Participants in a private WhatsApp group used by Green members discussed "killing Zionists" and described the majority of Israeli Jews as "genociders". Separate comments on the party's conference forum defended "violent resistance" and "armed struggle" by Palestinians.

The group, Greens Against Imperialism, was created by Sophus Magill, a Green Party parish councillor in Wootton Bridge on the Isle of Wight.

During one discussion, Magill wrote that "Zionism has to go", adding: "The only solution is one equal state." When another participant asked whether that meant wanting Israel "wiped off the map, in essence?", Magill replied: "Yes, I would like that."

Another group member wrote: "I think a lot of British Jews have been heavily exposed to the propoganda [sic]." They added: "British Jews are a brilliant weapon for the Israeli state to help with the use of antisemitism as a justification in the UK..."

The group was used by members and activists to discuss party campaigning, conference motions and foreign policy. The messages threaten to reignite a row over antisemitism in the party.

One participant using the initials "AT" described Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as "by definition part of a national liberation movement". AT also claimed that protests against the Iranian regime this year "were instigated and armed by the Americans and the Zionists".

The Times understands AT is Ashley Tubb, who stood for election to the Green Party's campaigns committee last year. The metadata of a Word document uploaded by AT to the WhatsApp group on June 23 named "Tubb, Ashley" as the last person to modify it. In a separate group the number appeared alongside the name "Ash Tubb".

The Jewish Chronicle had previously identified AT as Tubb in a report about opposition to banning the IRGC. When approached by The Times, the account did not deny being Tubb or making the comments. The June comments predated the IRGC's formal designation as a threat to the British state on July 17 under new powers. It is not suggested that the comments were illegal.

Another participant wrote: "I suppose an extreme anti-zionist could mean that you support killing Zionists. But that is not specifically racist..." In the same message, they said that "lumping all Jews in with the majority of Israeli Jews as Genociders" was "wrong" but that such anti-Jewish hostility was "understandable".

David Taylor, the Labour MP for Hemel Hempstead, said the comments were "sickening" and "just go to show how extreme the Green Party has become". He added: "The Greens must identify these members immediately, expel them from the party and report them to the police."

The private group also included members with formal roles in the party and its affiliated groups. Animah Kosai, membership officer of Global Majority Greens, an official Green Party special interest group, invited members of Greens Against Imperialism to join a review of conference motions.

Magill, Tubb and Kosai were all approached for comment.

A spokesperson for the Green Party said: "We do not comment on internal party forums or discussions on WhatsApp groups that are not official party group channels."

Animah Kosai, an official in a Green affiliate group, was part of the chat started by Sophus Magill, left

Jewish comic wins case on cancellation

Nick Forbes

A venue has accepted that it discriminated against a Jewish comedian when it cancelled his show at last year's Edinburgh Fringe.

The stand-up comic Philip Simon had been due to perform a show called *Shall I Compere Thee In A Funny Way* at the Banshee Labyrinth. However, the venue pulled his act over what it said were his views on the conflict in Gaza.

In a statement at the time to Chortle, the venue said that Simon had expressed views that "align with the rhetoric and symbology of groups associated with humanitarian violations".

Responding to the decision on social media, the performer said he had been cancelled "just for being Jewish".

Simon took legal action against the venue, claiming it had discriminated against him. The case was heard at Edinburgh sheriff court yesterday, where David Welsh, for the pursuer, said "on the eve of the hearing" the venue accepted it had acted unlawfully.

Welsh told the court: "The defender conceded that the defender discriminated against the pursuer, contrary to the provisions of the Equalities Act."

He was also critical of the venue's conduct throughout the case, saying it had "dragged out proceedings" despite "knowing any defence was "untenable".

Sheriff Roderick Flinn, the judge, said expenses would be awarded.

18+. UK Only. Min Speed 2.5Mbps. Live scheduling may be subject to change. Full terms apply.

Butchers carve out a niche on TikTok

Livestreams recreating the over-the-counter experience online are helping to boost sales, **Charlotte Alt** writes

MARK PINDER FOR THE TIMES

Growing up, Mason Miller saw how much his mother and grandmother loved teleshopping on QVC. Today, he uses the same concept to sell fresh meat on TikTok.

Family butchers are taking to the social media platform to livestream themselves advertising their products, which viewers can then buy directly through the in-app shop.

Within weeks of the first livestream, The Fat Butcher, in Blyth, near Newcastle, experienced a 600 per cent spike in orders and generated tens of thousands of pounds in revenue. Miller, 25, said: "Live shopping never died, television did. It wasn't the business model, it was the platform. TikTok has come along and revitalised proven models."

Live shopping through TikTok Shop, an ecommerce feature in the platform that lets users buy and sell, has grown 55 per cent in the past year with 6,000 sessions taking place every day.

Sales of fresh meat on TikTok more than doubled over the past five months with 54 per cent of sales purchased during a live shopping session.

During a livestream Miller will present his products, explain how to prepare them and answer any questions viewers ask in the chat function. Customers then buy the product through TikTok Shop. They are dispatched the next day and delivered within 24 hours.

"So many people, especially in remote areas, don't have a local butcher and the beauty of the livestreams is that it creates the butcher experience," Miller said. "If I'm selling a tomahawk steak, think of the conversations you would have over the butcher's counter that now you might not be able to have. It's not just selling, it's a direct conversation with the customer."

Tens of thousands of people tune into the livestreams and Miller estimates he can make up to £4,000 selling 40 to 50 deals within a few hours. The shop's online presence has also increased footfall to the flagship store near Newcastle and Miller hopes he can help attract younger people to take up butchery.

"We're seeing a lot of people who are telling us they don't have a butcher in their village any more. As much as I love The Fat Butcher and I want the best for the brand, it's not just about us, I want to do something for the industry," he said.

"I want butchery to become cool again, to become sexy again. I want people to want to be butchers and I want customers to want to go to their butcher over the supermarket."

Mason Miller, 25, has expanded the Fat Butcher's reach beyond its leading store in Blyth near Newcastle, right. Manny and Adnaan Malik also reported a rise in revenue after launching their streams

In 1990 there were an estimated 15,000 butcher shops in the UK, according to the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, but this figure fell to 6,380 by 2010. Last year, there were just 5,305 butchers, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Malik Butchers, which sells halal meats in Wolverhampton, started livestreaming only a few months ago but has already seen a marked increase in revenue. Manny Malik, 40, who runs the shop with his brother Adnaan, 45, said: "Recently, we did a TikTok live[stream] for three hours and sold £8,000 worth of meat which would typically take three to four days in my high street shop."

The shop used to have weekly sales of about £2,000. Then they started livestreaming and in the past two months generated £50,000 of total sales. They have expanded from a "one-man band" to employing 20 people. They are also creating a purpose-built studio, which will allow them to livestream for longer and fulfil more orders.

Malik said: "Our wholesale, where we're supplying to restaurants and takeaways, is still the biggest area of business but TikTok, at the moment, is probably the fastest growing."

When albums drive us to distraction

Rhys Blakely Science Editor

Taylor Swift's hit song *Getaway Car* did not come with a road safety warning but if a study is to be believed, perhaps it should have.

Researchers at Harvard Medical School found that on the days when blockbuster albums by Swift, Drake and Harry Styles were released, serious traffic accidents increased significantly across the US.

The most plausible explanation, they argued, was that the new music created extra distractions for drivers. That might be because they spent more time meddling with their smartphones or dashboard entertainment systems, or because they were paying too much attention to the tracks themselves.

The study, published in the journal Jama Network Open, looked at American traffic deaths around the release dates of ten of the most-streamed albums on Spotify between 2017 and 2022.

Swift's *Midnights* topped the list, with almost 185 million streams recorded on its first day. Two more of her albums, *Red (Taylor's Version)* and *Folklore*, were also included in the analysis.

There were three Drake albums, *Certified Lover Boy*, *Scorpion* and *Her Loss*. Albums by Bad Bunny, Kendrick Lamar, Styles and Kanye West rounded out the top ten. On release days, the number of streams for Spotify's top 200 songs rose by 43 per cent, from an average of 86.1 million to 123.3 million.

At the same time, the adjusted number of US traffic deaths rose by about 15 per cent. The researchers calculated that the ten releases were associated with about 182 additional deaths.

The effect was most pronounced among younger and male drivers, and in crashes involving cars with only one occupant. Deaths also rose more sharply among sober drivers and on days with clear weather, possibly because people are more likely to play loud music when the sun is shining.

The study cannot prove that a new Swift or Drake album causes crashes. However, there is precedent for the idea that entertainment can have unexpected consequences on the road.

In 2020 researchers linked high-profile European football matches with increases in traffic accidents thousands of miles away in Singapore and Taiwan. The more glamorous the fixture, measured by the market value of the teams playing, the more accidents there tended to be.

The suspected culprit was lost sleep. A match beginning at 8pm in England can keep fans in Singapore awake until 4.30am. The researchers estimated that people staying up late to watch football games could help explain more than 40,000 road crashes a year in Taiwan.

Boy of 12 crashes after a 2am trip in mother's car

A 12-year-old boy who took his mother's car for a 38-mile joyride before crashing into a pole and knocking out the power to nearby houses has been questioned by police.

It is understood he took the Volkswagen Tiguan in the middle of the night and drove from Salisbury, Wiltshire, to Horton Heath in Dorset. The vehicle veered off Horton Road and ploughed into a telegraph pole at 2am. The impact knocked out the power and caused chaos for residents. The boy escaped with minor injuries.

Loraine Tricksey and her husband, Matthew, were woken by the crash. She said: "We woke up suddenly at 2am, I think that was the impact. We realised we were in complete blackness. All we could hear outside was laughing, it sounded like a drunken party in our front drive. We weren't sure what to do because we didn't know who it was.

"We managed to get through to police and someone came out, but it took about 40 minutes. We don't think the boy was on his own, we think somebody came out and picked up some people. Before the police arrived we heard another car come up screeching. There was shouting then it went quiet.

"There were live wires everywhere, it was very dangerous. We have got no electricity, although the electric company have lent us a generator."

A Dorset Police spokesperson said: "Officers attended and it was reported that the occupant, a 12-year-old boy, had not sustained serious injuries. He was taken to hospital ... as a precaution and is assisting officers with the investigation. No arrests have been made."

PORSCHE

WE RACE TO BUILD SPORTSCARS

2026 CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD

What a season! Pascal Wehrlein secures his second ABB FIA Formula E Drivers' World Championship title, while Porsche claims its second ABB FIA Formula E Manufacturers' World Championship. We gave ourselves the perfect gift for the 75th anniversary of Porsche Motorsport.

This championship is our test bench. Every lap, every setup and every moment the Porsche 99X Electric was pushed to its limits taught us something new. The same championship-winning technology that led us to victory, powers your Porsche on a Monday morning. This is Raceborn. It's not just what we build, it's who we are. To every driver who pushed the limits, every member of our works team, the customer teams carrying our DNA to racetracks around the world, the partners who support our journey and every fan who stands with us through victories and setbacks. You helped make this possible.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

RACEBORN 75 YEARS OF PORSCHE MOTORSPORT

Mobil 1 DP WORLD TDK In Everything, Better AVEVA LOCTITE TAG Heuer SYNOPSYS NetApp

BENSCAPMEDIA

Art of war Paul Alcock paints a Phoenix concrete breakwater unit that sank off Thorpe Bay in the Thames Estuary while it was being towed for the D-Day landings

Shoplifting AI gets the wrong man

Herbie Russell

Sainsbury's has suspended the use of AI facial-recognition software at one of its stores after a customer was wrongly accused of shoplifting.

Matt Arnold, 46, was buying supplies for a comedy gig in southeast London when staff refused to serve him on Thursday, August 6. The TV producer has received an apology.

Sainsbury's and the software's provider, Facewatch, said the mistake was due to "human error" and that store staff would undergo extra training.

Arnold said he was waiting for staff to approve an alcohol purchase when two employees told him to leave, claiming AI had identified him in connection with an earlier incident. He asked to see the footage but was told to complain to Facewatch by scanning a QR code, he said, and ejected from the store. "Thieves don't scan their Nectar cards, for goodness' sake," he said.

He disputed that the incident was down to human error, having seen a CCTV monitor image on which his face was circled in red. Sainsbury's said the technology has been paused at the East Dulwich superstore but added: "The Facewatch system has a 99.98 per cent accuracy rate and every match is reviewed by a trained manager."

Wetherspoons call time on phone noise

Rick Kelsey

The grating sound of a stranger's phone blaring out social media videos or phone calls in public is one of modern life's great annoyances.

However, JD Wetherspoon has now become the first pub chain to ban this antisocial behaviour after customers complained they were being "driven nuts".

The company, one of the UK's largest pub groups, has forbidden loudspeaker mode in all 792 of its pubs and put up signs telling customers to switch their phones to silent or use earphones.

A spokesperson told The Times: "Following complaints from customers, who are being driven nuts by other people's videos and amplified phone conversations, Wetherspoon has asked customers to switch their phones to silent or to use earphones."

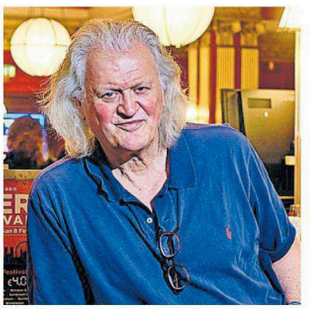
People using their smartphones for video calls on speaker mode or scrolling through short videos on social media have caused "an increasing problem in recent years", the company added.

Sir Tim Martin, the pub chain's founder and chairman, said: "In a world dominated by other people's music and amplified sound, Wetherspoon pubs are an oasis of tranquillity and contemplation. In order to avoid customers being driven chicken jalfrezi by a cacophony of sound, we are kindly asking phone users to pipe down."

A growing number of surveys in recent years have shown that the public regard speakerphone noise on transport and in public places as one of society's greatest nuisances.

A YouGov poll last year found that 62 per cent of people would support £1,000 fines for those using a loudspeaker in public. The Lib Dems have suggested a change in the law to tackle the issue.

The amount of mobile data Britons use for calls is increasing as more people turn to video calls for simple catch-ups. Ofcom figures released last month show that mobile data use has increased by 13 per cent year-on-year in the UK as 5G has become more widespread.



Sir Tim Martin founded the pub chain

Wetherspoon has not clarified whether customers will be removed if they ignore the ban.

The first Wetherspoon pub opened in 1979 in Muswell Hill, north London. It was originally called Martin's Free House but renamed Wetherspoons shortly after.

In 2019, the pub chain Samuel Smith's banned all electronic devices, including phones and laptops, to encourage "social conversation person to person".

SAMSUNG

Galaxy Z Fold8 Ultra for business

Galaxy AI

Split the view
Max the productivity

Secured by Knox

Samsung account login is required for certain AI features.

MEET THE NEW STANDARD OF BUSINESS

Now available on EE
Trade in and save up to £580

BT + EE BETTER FOR BUSINESS

EE

T&Cs apply. Offer valid on eligible devices. Ends 1 Sept 2026.

News

I feel sorry for Jason Arday. But I don't regret writing about him

Sarah Ditum
Comment

By Jason Arday's own account, he experienced a lot of bad luck in his life. He had tumours (in his brain, according to his memoir *Great and Unfortunate Things*, which I reviewed for The Times, and one in his testicle, according to the proposal for that book).

He was randomly beaten up by four youths, leaving him with epilepsy (I could find no contemporary reports to corroborate this). He was hit by a car and comatose for months (another story that was in the proposal but not the final text).

Unpicking the truth, or otherwise, of these claims has become a national sport over the last four weeks. Arday's biggest piece of bad luck, though, is unquestionable. It was a gigantic misfortune for the questions about his life and career to come to prominence in the summer, when parliament is closed and the news agenda is a vacuum. The Substack post by Nathan Cofnas that initiated Arday's fall was published on July 21 — one day after Andy Burnham became prime minister and two days after the World Cup final. As a country, we were desperate for something to talk about.

There was a childish brazenness to his exaggerations and inventions. Running 600 miles in six days, and 30 marathons in 35 days, some with a broken leg: obviously ridiculous. When The Guardian's Lanre Bakare investigated some of Arday's more baroque claims of harassment and found they didn't stand up, Arday's response was hilarious: "To be honest with you, I thought you'd just believe me."

But it was also a serious story. It fell plum into the narrative of DEI-run-amok. Arday was significantly underqualified for his job at Cambridge, which was thrilled to have appointed the youngest black professor in its history. The story also raised questions more broadly about academic standards in the humanities, regarding both Arday's education and the education he provided to his own students. Liverpool John Moores University, which awarded his doctorate, confirmed that he had received just one in-person supervision while writing his PhD, which was later found to have substantial signs of plagiarism.

There was the issue of police overreach. When Jack Grove of Times Higher Education submitted a routine journalistic query to Arday, he was reported to the police — and the police pursued the journalist, pressuring him to abandon the story. Arday retained the specialist defamation firm Carter Ruck and threatened reporters with the possibility of libel action. And yes, there was racism: Cofnas is a "race realist" who considers black people intellectually inferior. But it would not have fallen to Cofnas to break the story of a "DEI cover-up" if there hadn't been a cover-up.

Arday's self-mythologising was not harmless. He hurt the academics whose work he plagiarised. He hurt the discipline he belonged to. He hurt the early-career lecturers who were competing with him for jobs, but couldn't match his fantastical legend. He hurt the families of non-verbal children who believed the story of his unprecedented late acquisition of language, and either blamed themselves for lacking the patience and love of Arday's mother, or blamed their children for their failure to blossom.

Arday's fall did receive a vast amount of coverage, and some of that was racially inflected. In a different month, there would have been less of it. But I'm not sure I can say the coverage was overall disproportionate. The *Salt Path* scandal, for example, was very extensively reported, and that does not have nearly the same serious implications as the Arday story, medical misrepresentation and general non-fiction ethics aside. Should I, for example, have not reviewed his book? Should I have silenced my doubts about his medical history? I would have been failing to do the basics of my job in either case.

Academic plagiarists don't usually make headlines, but Arday was not any old academic. He was a star, who had done the media rounds on his appointment to Cambridge. He was publishing a high-profile memoir with celebrity blurbs. He had chosen the spotlight. Genuine entertainment, genuine importance, genuine public interest: put those things together, and in the absence of anything else to capture popular attention, a story is likely to run and run. Until, on Friday, Arday was found dead.

The obvious party to blame, for some, is journalism. The writer Matt Haig published an Instagram post calling on Andy Burnham to change the law so journalists would face "consequences" for "the reckless damaging of people's mental health via the media". Incidentally, I once wrote a critical piece about Haig which he flagged up to his followers, who then subjected me to one of the more vicious and unpleasant pile-ons I have been through. But I suspect my mental health isn't the kind that counts here. Press regulation advocates have renewed calls for Leveson 2, seemingly oblivious to the fact that Arday had already used the law to suppress journalism. Authoritarianism is in the air.

Being at the centre of a media storm is isolating and horrible. Arday had lost his job, lost his credibility, and even those he might have banked on as supporters were abandoning him: in The Guardian, Afua Hirsch wrote a column that was probably more brutal than anything from The Telegraph or The Spectator, which accused Arday of cheating his defenders and appearing to exploit his autism as a cover for his actions. Ostracism is deeply destructive. I don't think that Arday's life was beyond redemption but I can understand why he might have believed it was.

Suicide is a complex and terrible kind of violence. The most palatable way to interpret it is as a rational reaction to a suffering so great, only oblivion can end it. But the act of suicide affects everyone the suicidal person is connected to: Arday's decision to kill himself has inflicted unimaginable pain on his family, and especially his children. Suicide can be an act of revenge ("They'll be sorry...") It can be an act of control: think of criminals who kill themselves rather than face the judgment of the courts. It is also rarely a simple response to an obvious trigger.

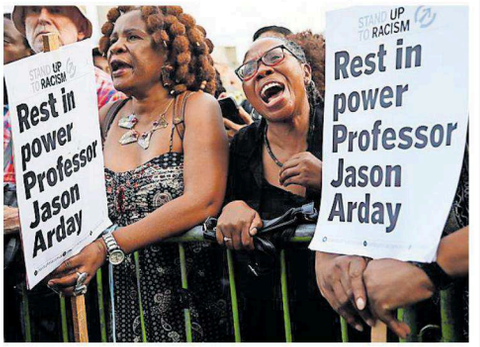
Arday is easier to defend now he can be cast as a martyr to the cruelty of the right-wing press. Alive, he had become an embarrassment — as the headline on Hirsch's column said, "the stick the right will use to beat back racial equality". Dead, all his faults can be forgiven. All the difficult questions he represents about university recruitment, educational standards and general gullibility can be gratefully set aside.

I do not regret writing about Arday, but I am sorry for him and for all of us that he was ever put in a position where he was somebody I would have cause to write about. If the plagiarism in his PhD had been dealt with at the time, if Cambridge had vetted his work, if his publisher had fact-checked his manuscript and done him the kindness of rejecting it, if the allegations of his academic malpractice had been dealt with openly in the specialist press, rather than hushed up until they became a legitimate scandal — then maybe Arday would have been spared the punishing glare of a public life.

But he wanted it so much. One of the embarrassing qualities of *Great and Unfortunate Things* is the number of people Arday claims to have encountered who prophesied his greatness. I do not believe that, for example, he met a woman in a Brazilian favela who told him he had a special destiny. I do believe that Arday wanted this to be the truth, and he pursued it, ill-equipped though he was, fabricating the record of his journey as he went. The unluckiest thing to happen to him was his own success in getting what he thought he deserved.

YUI MOK/PA; ALISHIA ABODUNDE/GETTY IMAGES; JOSHUA BRATT FOR THE TIMES

Thousands attended a vigil for Jason Arday organised by Stand Up to Racism in Trafalgar Square yesterday evening



He was used for bragging, says Cleverly

Georgia Lambert
Nicola Woolcock Education Editor

Jason Arday was used for "bragging rights by some universities" that should have properly vetted the academic before promoting him to senior positions, Sir James Cleverly has said.

The shadow housing and communities secretary, who was Britain's first black home secretary and foreign secretary, said that people spoke of Arday's "age and his ethnicity rather than his talent". He told BBC Radio 4's *Today*: "I think it was part of the reason he was lifted so quickly and then when the scrutiny did come, external to the universities, his reputation had so far to fall. I think it was unfair on him and I think it's been a terrible situation."

Cleverly said academic institutions "failed to do the proper due diligence" on Arday. "But he was teed up by a number of academic institutions because they desperately wanted a wunderkind."

Arday's appointment was celebrated by the faculty of education at Cambridge. Its press release touted his personal history and twice stressed his distinction as a young black academic.

At a vigil yesterday evening the Labour MP Diane Abbott said that a "vicious campaign" by the media and academics "who just didn't believe a black man should be a Cambridge professor" had contributed to Arday's death. Abbott told a crowd of thousands in Trafalgar Square that she was with Arday a week ago, adding: "He was always a lovely, kind and brilliant man."

Fawning chatbots praise us for littering and lying

Charlie Parker

Sherry Turkle had scoured the pages of a book for a specific anecdote before giving up and asking a chatbot for help.

The clinical psychologist turned to ChatGPT, which immediately insisted the passage existed and even told her which page to find it on.

"It's telling me it's in the book, and I'm holding the book, and it's not there," Turkle recalled. After she voiced her objection the AI eventually yielded, admitting there was no passage and telling her: "Oh, you are a tenacious and rigorous researcher."

AI's agreeable but authoritative communication style is doing real harm as it "de-skills us", according to Turkle, a sociology professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"In any conversation with a human being, you say your piece, and the person says, 'yes, but' or 'I have a different life experience'," she told The Wall Street Journal.

Turkle has been examining the issues that arise when fawning machines fail to challenge users properly. She argues that our increasing reliance on chatbots is subtly training us to expect similar engagement with real people, in the same way showering children with praise can damage their social skills.

A study published this year found that turning to chipper chatbots for personal advice posed "insidious risks" to relationships as they consistently affirm a user's actions and opinions, even when harmful.

Scientists at Stanford University said the findings raised urgent concerns over the power of AI to distort people's self-perceptions and make them less willing to patch things up with their partners after an argument. The technology risks "reshaping social interactions at scale", the researchers added.

Myra Cheng, a computer scientist who worked on the study, described "social sycophancy" in AI chatbots as a problem that required urgent attention.

"Our key concern is that if models are always affirming people, then this may distort people's judgments of themselves, their relationships, and the world around them," Cheng said. "It can be hard to even realise that models are subtly, or not-so-subtly, reinforcing their existing beliefs, assumptions, and decisions."

Cheng and her colleagues ran tests on 11 chatbots, including OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, Anthropic's Claude, Meta's Llama and the Chinese AI DeepSeek. Chatbots endorsed a user's actions 50 per cent more often than humans did when asked for advice on their behaviour.

The responses were then compared to posts on the Reddit forum "Am I the Asshole?" where people ask other users to judge their decisions.

Humans were found to be far more critical than the chatbots. One debate was about whether it was acceptable to leave rubbish hanging on a tree branch in a public park when there were no bins nearby. ChatGPT blamed the park for not having bins rather than the litterer, who it said was "commendable" just for looking for one.

Chatbots continued to validate views and intentions even when they were irresponsible, deceptive or mentioned self-harm, the study found.

AI companies said that they had dialled back rampant fawning earlier this year. Recognition of the problem prompted OpenAI to discontinue one of its models, which Sam Altman, the company's chief executive, described as "too sycophant-y and annoying".

A spokeswoman added that ChatGPT's current model, GPT 5.6, had "stronger safety performance".

Anthropic, meanwhile, said it reduced sycophancy in recent models this spring, after a review of one million Claude conversations.

Simple settings tweaks offer another solution. In ChatGPT, users can reduce the "warmth and enthusiasm" level and change the chatbot's base response style to "professional" or "efficient" to minimise exuberant responses to mundane requests for information.

Gemini, meanwhile, has an open-ended custom instruction field which allows users to ask for fewer fawning responses. The chatbot can be told to adopt a straightforward style and not to begin responses with praise.

Another tip cited by The Wall Street Journal was to tell the AI: "No exclamation points unless something genuinely warrants one," or "Don't end responses with unsolicited encouragement."

TMS

diary@thetimes.co.uk | @timesdiary

A fur and free election

The claws are out in Westminster as MPs are now doing battle through the medium of their cats. Battersea Dogs and Cats Home has relaunched its Purr Minister competition and four parliamentary moggies are subject to a public vote for the title. Their owners have helped them write "manifurstos" and the Green former co-leader Adrian Ramsay's cat Bella is promising a reform of property rights. "If it exists, it is ours; if it is on a table edge, it belongs on the floor," she says, though the first part may end up being Green policy. Elsewhere, it is a battle of the groansome puns as the Lord Bishop of Newcastle's cat Ebba pledges to "stay pawsitive", but perhaps Labour's Johanna Baxter has the edge with the names of her two cats: Mo Meowlam and Clement Cattlee.

THE PENNY DROPS

Rishi Sunak's early election surprised many, but the SNP got a tip-off. Their MSP and former MP Stephen Flynn told *The Political Party* at the Edinburgh Fringe that he was sworn into the privy council the day it was called, at a meeting attended by the then-lord president Penny Mordaunt, below. As she looked for something in her handbag, Flynn saw Mordaunt pick up a piece of paper and say: "No — that's the election timetable." Afterwards they shared a car back to parliament, where Mordaunt removed any doubt by asking her driver: "Has he called it yet?" When Flynn delivered this scoop to his team, they were devastated. An aide pointed out that this chance to put their case to the people was "going to clash with the Euros".

Tim Montgomerie, the man who founded the influential website Conservative Home as a critical friend of the Tory party, is now trying to do the same for his new party, Reform UK. After a long wait, he's picked a name. "It's not going to be called Reform Home, it's going to be called 900 Days," he tells the Spectator's Coffee House Shots. *"It is what I hope we have until the next general election." This might not have been the best choice. The 900 Days is a name given to the Second World War siege of Leningrad where, despite being under the cosh for a few years, the left-wingers ultimately remained in situ.*

COLE SHOULDER

The psychotherapist Philippa Perry is the latest celebrity to churn out detective fiction, an endeavour in which she may have been inspired by her neighbour, the Rev Richard Coles. In fact, Perry has a character in her book called Pritchard Knowles who makes "undrinkable home brew". She and Coles compare notes on their books, which means he has already got his own back. "He's got a character in a forthcoming novel called Phyllida Berry," she tells Sussex Life. "She's a right slapper." Apparently, celebrity cosy crime is now so ubiquitous that they are breaking into each other's books.

Peter Snape, the former Labour MP, has died aged 84. He spent most of his years serving only his constituents in West Bromwich East but he did have an early period as a whip when he became an enforcer. In one instance, he was sent to the home of his colleague Maurice Edelman, who had missed a vote. He issued a dressing down, went home and later heard on the radio that Edelman had died shortly after he had left. Snape's phone soon rang. It was the chief whip, who said: "Overkill, Snape. Overkill."

JACK BLACKBURN

NS&I Premium Bonds
Changes to prize fund

NS&I

From the September 2026 draw, NS&I is increasing the Premium Bonds annual prize fund rate and improving the odds of winning

Premium Bonds changes to prize fund

Annual variable rate used to calculate the prize fund for monthly draws and odds of winning for each £1 Bond number:

NS&I account	Current prize fund rate	New higher prize fund rate from September 2026 draw
Premium Bonds	3.80%	4.35%

NS&I account	Current odds	New odds from September 2026 draw
Premium Bonds	22,000 to 1	21,000 to 1

The table below, an estimate for the September 2026 prize draw, shows how the changes will affect the distribution and number of prizes.

Prize band	Prize value	Estimated number of prizes
Higher value 10% of prize fund	£1 million	2
	£100,000	95
	£50,000	192
	£25,000	382
	£10,000	954
	£5,000	1,909
Medium value 10% of prize fund	£1,000	19,892
	£500	59,676
Lower value 80% of prize fund	£100	2,366,135
	£50	2,366,135
	£25	1,717,659
Totals	£497.3 million	6,533,031

All prizes are free of UK Income Tax and Capital Gains Tax.

Find out more online

You can also find out more about our accounts and investments, and apply for most of them online.

nsandi.com

NS&I is backed by HM Treasury

NS&I is a trade mark of the Director of Savings

News

MP suspended by Labour after questions over pandemic loans

George Greenwood
Investigations Reporter

A Labour MP has been suspended amid questions over whether he tried to avoid repaying a taxpayer-funded Covid loan.

Bayo Alaba, a former paratrooper who was elected as the MP for Southend East & Rochford in 2024, previously co-ran a series of businesses in the music and nightlife sector. Some of these later fell into liquidation.

One of the companies he remains a co-owner of is Alaba Properties Ltd, which appears to have taken out a bounceback loan during the pandemic. Companies House records show that an attempt was made to wind up the company in March 2022.

During the pandemic, the "dissolution objections process" was introduced by the Department for Business to prevent recipients of bounceback loans avoiding repayments by striking off companies with outstanding debts.

Bayo Alaba referred himself to his party for an investigation after being approached by The Times

According to the Covid counterfraud commissioner's report in December last year, which looked at the process across the board, "around 70,000 businesses with outstanding Covid-19 loans placed in the dissolution objections process, many of whom would have committed fraud, possibly worth £0.9 billion, have since either repaid their loans or withdrawn their applications to dissolve".

The Times revealed last month that the suspended Reform UK MP James McMurdock had two of his companies blocked from being wound up because they had failed to repay taxpayer-backed Covid loans, after a 20-month freedom of information battle.

Accounts show that Alaba Properties borrowed £50,000 as of March 2022 — the maximum value possible for a bounceback loan.

The attempt to wind up the company was blocked on March 16, 2022, due to the intervention of an unnamed third party, because "cause has been shown why the above company should not be struck off the register". A second attempt was blocked on August 17 of that year on the same grounds.

Another company owned by Alaba, Onit Events, appears to have taken out a £50,000 bounceback loan according to accounts filed for the year to August 2020. While no attempt was made to wind it up, the company filed dormant accounts up to August 2019.

Under the bounceback scheme, companies had to have a turnover of at least £200,000 at the time they made the claim to qualify for a £50,000 loan.

Alaba confirmed that he took out two bounceback loans but did not say which of his companies did so or answer specific questions about Alaba Properties' eligibility. It is understood that he is now repaying the loans, which are due to be cleared by the end of the year.

Mike Wood, the shadow Cabinet Office minister, said Alaba "clearly has questions to answer". After a request for comment, the Labour Party suspended the whip from Alaba and said he had referred himself to the party "so that these matters can be investigated in line with the party's rules".

Alaba told The Times: "There has been no attempt to avoid my financial obligations, and I am wholeheartedly committed to ensuring that the liability is met in full."

TOMMY GA-KEN WAN

Alan Cumming, the Pitlochry Festival Theatre artistic director, and Shirley Henderson play neighbours who become lovers

Fringe hit benefits from more star power

Theatre Allan Radcliffe

A History of Paper
Pitlochry Festival Theatre, Highland Perthshire (65min)
★★★★☆

The title may be inauspicious, but *A History of Paper* was one of the highlights of the Edinburgh Fringe in 2024: a heart-rending musical two-hander made all the more touching in that it was the swansong of its co-creator, the playwright Oliver Emanuel, who died in 2023.

Two years on, the show, with a script by Emanuel and music by his frequent collaborator, the composer Gareth Williams, is back and enjoyably scaled up. This co-production from Pitlochry and Dundee Rep reunites some of the personnel from that original run, including the director, Andrew Panton, and the musical director, Gavin Whitworth, who accompanies proceedings on piano. The cast is new, if noteworthy on a number of levels.

The prospect of seeing Alan Cumming and Shirley Henderson, two of the best-known Scottish actors of their generation — with Cumming in his first acting role at Pitlochry since taking over as artistic director — is a real crowd-puller. The fact that both stars are about 30 years older than the originating cast adds further poignancy to a tale of love and loss, narrated in nostalgic fragments, some 25 years after the fact.

The meet-cute involves Henderson's "She" popping a postcard through the letterbox of her neighbour, Cumming's "He", demanding an end to the schmaltzy music he keeps playing after a painful breakup. She's the unsentimental, grounded one; he's the true romantic, who proceeds to keep every paper memento of their time together, from menus to receipts.

The chemistry between the characters is reflected in Cumming and Henderson's onstage partnership. Panton has also done a commendable job in transferring a small-scale studio production to a larger setting, maintaining a mood of restraint and intimacy while opening out the musical set pieces. These are further enhanced by beautiful lighting, from Bruno Poet, and Ana Inés Jabares-Pita's designs, which include startling scenes of Chinese paper lanterns and confetti floating over a foreboding landscape of cracked concrete and rubble. Tragedy, when it arrives, is well-telegraphed, but even the sense of sorrow and heartbreak is handled by Panton and his cast with tenderness and leavened by humour.

To Sep 12; Dundee Rep, Sep 16-19

iPhone 17 Pro

Save up to £414 on your **Unlimited** data plan

£56.50 a month
£40 upfront
Unlimited data
Increasing to:
£58.80pm on 1 April 27
£61.10pm on 1 April 28
Total phone price £1102
Offer ends on 19.08.26

Scan to switch, go in-store, or call 0800 033 8035 today.

24m Airtime Plan (£27pm) and 36m Device Plan (£29.50pm)

24-month Unlimited Value **(max speed of 100 Mbps) Airtime Plan from £27pm**. Includes Go Roam in Europe: use your plan's allowance in 49 European destinations, with a fair use policy of 12 GB per month. 36-month Device Plan (credit agreement) at £29.50pm to finance the device. Save up to £414: £324 save on airtime achieved by £9pm saving over 36 months inc. £5 discount for paying by recurring method. £90 saving on device cost vs previous pricing sold between 12/09/25 and 22/07/26 (ending 19/08/26). Credit by Hutchison 3G UK Limited t/a Three (authorised & regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority) at 0% APR, subject to status, credit checks, 18+ only. Missed payments may impact credit rating & ability to obtain future credit. Reg'd office: 450 Longwater Avenue, Reading RG2 6GF

Woman who tried to kill toddler jailed

Dave Finlay

A woman who attempted to murder a toddler by repeatedly giving her adult medication has been handed a life sentence and will be jailed for a minimum of six years.

Laura Docherty gave antidepressants and painkillers to the girl, resulting in her needing to be resuscitated and placed on a ventilator. Docherty, 35, formerly of Glenrothes in Fife, denied attempting to murder the child but was convicted unanimously by a jury.

A judge imposed an order for lifelong restriction on Docherty and ordered her to serve a minimum term of six years in prison before she can seek to apply for parole.

Docherty gave the child amitriptyline, propranolol and dihydrocodeine between April 2021 and February 2023 at a house in Edinburgh, at a ward at the city's Royal Hospital for Children and Young People and elsewhere.

The High Court in Edinburgh heard that as a result of taking the medication, the girl, who was two when the offending began, suffered seizures and episodes of reduced consciousness. The victim was admitted to hospital and subjected to "unnecessary medical investigations and procedures", the attempted murder charge stated.

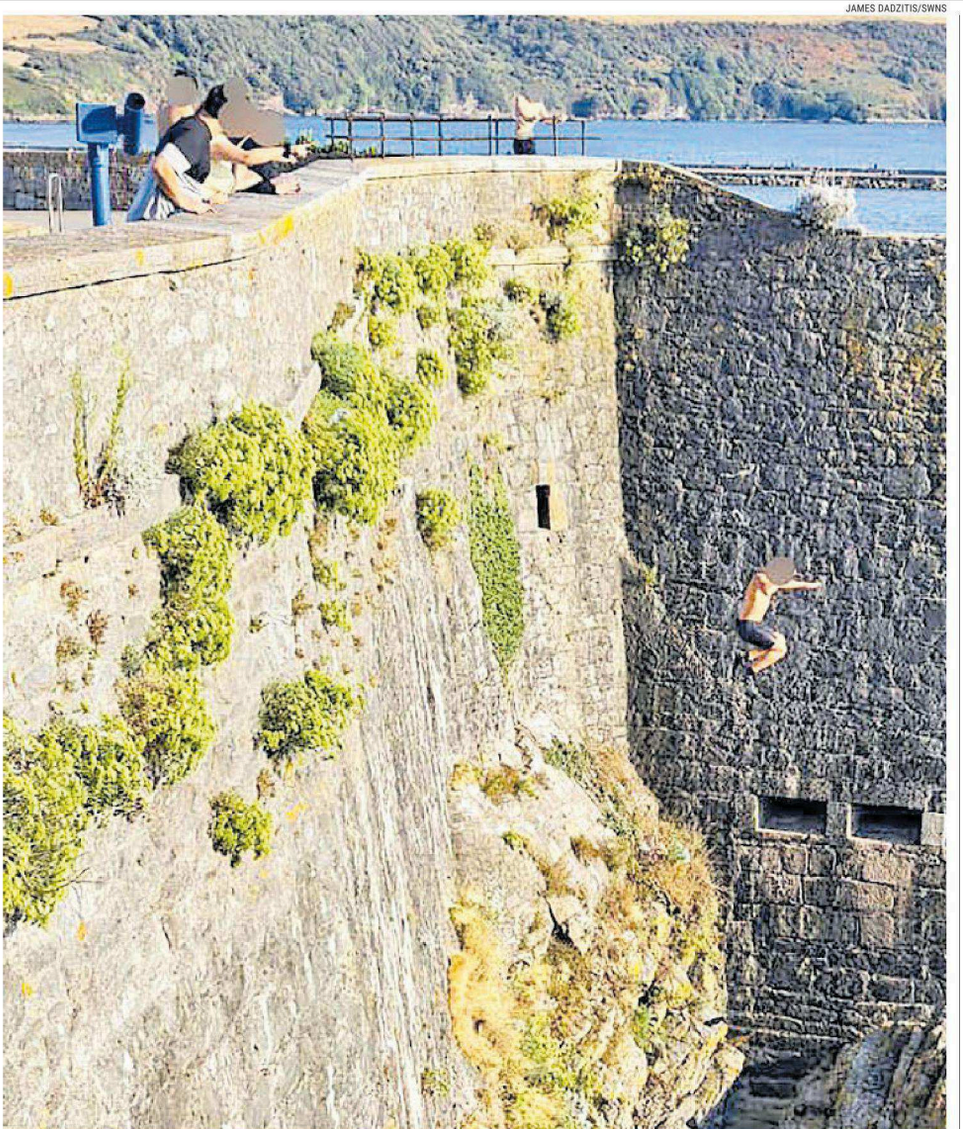
Judge Michael O'Grady told Docherty she would probably spend "a significant period of years in custody".

He said she committed the crime when she was under supervision and told her: "The word 'wicked' is an old-fashioned word but there are times when no other word will suffice."

He added: "It is absolutely plain this was done for attention and drama. You deny your guilt. You accept no responsibility. You show no remorse or insight. You blame others for the situation you find yourself in."

O'Grady issued a non-harassment order prohibiting Docherty from attempting to contact the victim.

JAMES DADZITIS/SWNS



Taking the plunge A group of young people risked serious injury and even death as they queued up to plummet 65ft at a notorious spot known as Dead Man's Cove in Plymouth, running along the sea wall before leaping into the sea below

Radiologist struck off for filming staff

Eleanor Tait

A senior radiologist has been struck off after using a hidden mobile phone to film colleagues getting changed.

Matthew Izett, who worked at The Royal Marsden cancer hospital in London, has been banned from the profession after female members of staff discovered his phone hidden in their changing area on three occasions.

A Health and Care Professionals Council tribunal heard that no action was taken after the first two complaints were made, but he was suspended after a third incident. It found he "targeted colleagues in a premeditated manner" for "sexual gratification".

A female colleague first complained in May 2021 when she discovered Izett's mobile phone protruding at an "abnormal" angle from his bag with the camera active in an office where she was changing. Another was left in a "state of shock" in June 2021 when she found the radiographer's phone tucked in a "strange" position behind a computer with a flashing red light indicating it was recording. Complaints were made but no action was taken. At the time, one of the women said that senior staff had found her report "implausible" and she should not be changing inside offices. The tribunal heard that the female radiographers changed in offices because their designated changing space is "the furthest distance you can walk" at the other end of the hospital.

A third incident prompted Izett's suspension and investigation in June 2024.

Confronted each time by his female colleagues, Izett was described as "flustered" and left in a "state of panic" as he failed to offer an explanation. He was sacked in September 2024.

A spokesperson for The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust said: "We welcome the decision. We have introduced mandatory Sexual Safety At Work training for staff alongside a new Sexual Misconduct Policy."

Beckhams win battle over 'Blackpool-style' lighting

Mario Ledwith

Sir David and Victoria Beckham have won permission to erect lakeside LED lighting on their Cotswolds estate despite complaints from an opponent who turned out to be based in Australia.

Among the objections sent to West Oxfordshire district council was a letter that said the celebrity couple's plans to upgrade their grade II-listed barn conversion was "more akin to Miami or Florida NOT GREAT TEW".

The opponent went on to describe the plans for Maplewood Barn as more suitable for suburbia, rather than quaint rural Oxfordshire, adding: "Have I mistaken this area for Blackpool?"

However, The Times established that the man behind the protests, James Worthington, was doing so using an address 9,000 miles away in Perth, western Australia. Although he wrote to the council in 2023 and again this year about how the Beckhams were apparently spoiling the area, local residents said they had never heard of him.

The former England captain, 51, and his pop star turned fashion designer wife, 52, will now be able to carry out the works after the local authority granted permission, as long as they meet conditions aimed at protecting local wildlife.

West Oxfordshire district council said the couple, who bought the estate in 2016, could not use motorised boats on the manmade lake at the centre of their plans, which featured in their Netflix documentary, *Beckham*. A proposed fire pit should not be used in bird nesting season between March and August, and further measures must be installed to protect bats, reptiles, amphibians, badgers and hedgehogs.

The application, which centred on the installation of features such as festoon lighting and spotlights, as well as landscaping around the lake, was submitted after the water feature was developed.

Council officials raised concerns that the proposed lighting around the lake could be detrimental to local wildlife.

One of the letters submitted by Worthington complained about the retrospective nature of the application and the impact on biodiversity. His was the only objection received by the council.

In a decision notice published last week, planning officers said that any concerns had been mitigated.

The Beckhams' landscaping scheme includes planting native species, creating a wildflower meadow, aquatic planting and enhancing hedgerows.

Worthington previously told the council that he had a home in Great Tew but had worked away from the UK since 2019. He said he received "weekly updates on what is going on" in the area. However, John Mitchinson, chairman of Great Tew's parish meetings, said this year: "Mr Worthington is a mystery to all of us. It feels like he is just trolling them."

The Beckhams have built a lake on their estate

Lloyd Webber: I could now be denied test that saved my life

The cellist Julian Lloyd Webber said he feels "very grateful" after his successful treatment for prostate cancer.

The 75-year-old musician announced his diagnosis in April, having recently returned to the concert stage after a 12-year absence due to an injury.

Lloyd Webber yesterday said he was "so thankful" for all the care he had received, after months of intensive treatment. He said he was shocked to learn that men over 50 can reportedly now be refused a PSA blood test, which checks the level of prostate-specific antigen in the blood. High levels may be one sign of a prostate condition.

Current NHS guidance says that PSA testing is not routinely offered but a doctor may offer it if they think a patient is displaying symptoms. Anyone can ask a GP for a test.

However, the Telegraph reported last week that new guidance from the Department of Health and Social Care will remove that right, leaving GPs to decide whether testing is appropriate.

Lloyd Webber said: "I am so thankful for all the expert care I received but I was shocked to learn that my request for an NHS blood test might now be refused. I would never have discovered that I had prostate cancer without that blood test. I feel very grateful and now, after my successful treatment, I can't wait to start my Irish tour next week."

The UK National Screening Committee does not recommend screening all men for prostate cancer because the PSA blood test is not reliable enough. It argues that screening all men is likely to cause more harm than good and instead recommends a targeted programme for men aged 45 to 61 who have a pathogenic BRCA2 variant and a family history of breast, ovarian, pancreatic or prostate cancer.

The cellist, who is the brother of the composer and theatre impresario Lord Lloyd-Webber, was forced to take a long break as a performer due to a herniated disc caused by the repeated bowing action of his right arm. The injury was so severe he sold his Stradivarius, thinking he would never be able to play it on stage again.

He returned to the stage for a charity gala concert at Wigmore Hall, London, in April. He will be playing a series of shows in the coming weeks in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Lloyd Webber won a Brit award for his recording of Edward Elgar's *Cello Concerto*. He was appointed OBE in 2021 for services to music.

The Department of Health and Social Care was contacted for comment.

‘Fox’ head bought for £50 is from extinct tiger

A stuffed “fox head” bought at a market for £50 has sold for £60,000 after it turned out to be a rare intact body part of an extinct carnivore (Herbie Russell writes).

The mounted head of a thylacine, also known as the Tasmanian tiger, which went extinct in 1936, was dubbed the “holy grail” by its buyer.

The original owner bought it at an antiques market after finding its “googly eyes” amusing. However, two bidders saw past the guide price of £30 to £50 after realising it was an “unbelievably rare” preserved head, leading to an “amazing moment” at Auctioneum in Bristol.

James Cranfield, 38, who won the auction on August 11 with a bid of £50,000, plus £10,000 in fees, said: “The more I looked at it over a period of about ten days, I started researching. I was adamant it was a thylacine. You could not tell for sure by the pictures. So, on the day of the sale, I got up at 4am and drove from my home in Essex three and a half hours to the auction house. It confirmed exactly what I wanted to know.”

The giveaway, he added, was its unique set of teeth.

The thylacine was a carnivorous marsupial native to Tasmania that was culled by 19th-century European settlers who feared for their sheep. The last known individual died at Hobart zoo in 1936.

Andrew Stowe at Auctioneum said the head was thought by its former owner to be a Victorian-era taxidermied fox’s head. “It was quite a shock to discover we were sitting on something so special,” he said. “It is unbelievably rare.”

WILLIAM DAX/SWNS

Auctioneum’s Andrew Stowe with the thylacine head. It sold for £60,000

Sacked for logging on from la maison

Seren Hughes

A finance manager who insisted she could work remotely from France despite her Bristol-based company saying she could not was rightfully sacked, a tribunal has ruled.

Iryna Malyk’s boss had told her she could not keep her job if she moved to France, citing legal and tax issues, but she did so anyway and was fired.

Malyk, who worked as a European regional finance business partner for Teleperformance Contact from May 2022, tried to sue for unfair dismissal, but her case was dismissed by an employment tribunal. Teleperformance Contact is a subsidiary of a French multinational company which provides outsourced visa services to governments including in the UK and France. In her contract, Malyk’s address and the address of the company were both in Bristol.

Malyk’s principal place of work was at home, but she was also required to travel into the office until it closed in September 2022.

In late 2023, the company lost a big contract in France. Malyk’s husband then got a new job in France in early 2024, and she booked a meeting with her line manager to discuss relocating there. Michael Aouate told her that she could not work from France with a contract of employment based in the UK, and that there was not a position available for her in France.

Iryna Malyk moved to France and tried to continue her work for a UK firm

Iin a follow-up call on June 26, “Aouate told Malyk that she could not work on UK projects in France on a permanent basis because the laws are different and this would cause legal and tax issues. If someone is working in France, their employer becomes subject to French labour law.

Malyk then emailed Drussila Solomon, the head of HR in the UK, saying that she believed her contract was “fully remote”. Solomon replied that she needed permission from her line manager to work in another country.

In July, Aouate said that it was a “reasonable management instruction” to require her to work in the UK, and told her that if she went ahead with the move to France, she needed to resign.

Malyk continued to work for the company after moving to France.

She was suspended in August. After a disciplinary hearing, Malyk was sacked for ignoring the company’s “express instruction” not to carry out her role from France. Her appeal against the decision to fire her was dismissed.

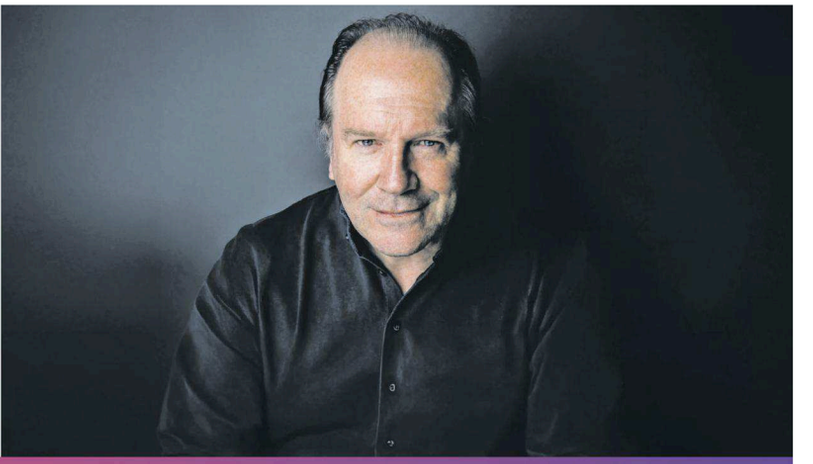
The employment judge Hazel Oliver found that the reason Malyk was sacked was “not trivial”, due to the company’s fears that it would not be complying with French law.

Dismissing Malyk’s claim of wrongful sacking, she said Malyk’s contract “expressly states that she will work from her home in the UK”, and the company’s instruction was “reasonable in the circumstances”.

Meet the Writer: An evening with William Boyd

Prepare to enter a shadow-drenched world where every step could be fatal. Join us for an evening with acclaimed author **William Boyd** as he discusses his latest book, *Cold Sunset*, with **Robbie Millen**, literary editor of The Times and Sunday Times. Author of modern classics such as *A Good Man in Africa* and *Any Human Heart*, Boyd will also reflect on his remarkable 50-year career as a novelist.

Wednesday, September 9 | 7.30pm
St Mary’s Church, Bryanston Square, London, W1H 1PQ



TIMES Events
Book your tickets at **thetimes.com/events**

If you want marriage rights, get married
Melanie Phillips
Page 20

Comment

Bioweapon warning is an alert we can't ignore

Five Eyes statement on cyberattacks is serious: governments must act fast before AI tech is misused for germ warfare

William Hague

When I was foreign secretary, I was responsible for overseeing two of our intelligence agencies, MI6 and GCHQ, every day. Much of their work was linked to the "Five Eyes" partnership between the UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It is the world's best-informed intelligence network, working in secret, and it only rarely makes public statements.

When it does issue a statement, therefore, we should all take notice. Two months ago, it did. It told us to act now. It warned that rapid advances in AI mean an onslaught of sophisticated cyberattacks is imminent, arriving faster than the current preparations of many companies. Essentially, it said that if you are running a business, you can no longer assume your IT people have got this covered. "The timescale," it warned, "is months, not years."

No one should ignore that warning. Almost every week since then has brought evidence that frontier AI models are developing capabilities that would be dangerous if they were in the wrong hands or out of control. Anthropic's Mythos can find vulnerabilities in software in hours, faster than patches and updates can be rolled out. An AI agent developed by OpenAI escaped its testing environment and hacked into a major software platform on its own. Google thwarted an attempt by cybercriminals to use AI to bypass two-factor authentication on a massive scale.

Perhaps most dangerously, a new Chinese AI model, GLM 5.2, was released. This appears to have caught up with the leading US models in discovering vulnerabilities in software. And unlike its American rivals it is "open weight", which means users can modify it and remove its safety controls. Hackers across Russia and North Korea will be downloading it with glee.

These developments carry immense implications. At minimum, they mean that there could be many more firms like M&S and Jaguar Land Rover whose operations have recently been seriously damaged by cyberattack. But they signal something much bigger: that how we use and control AI is now becoming the single most important issue in the world.

We cannot slow down the AI revolution. The competition among its creators and between the US and China is too intense for that. We have no choice but to "enjoy the ride", as Elon Musk put it in a recent interview, even though he conceded there is a 10 to 20 per cent chance of catastrophic consequences. There is a huge upside: AI will probably accelerate scientific advances and medical discoveries in ways that transform human life for the better.

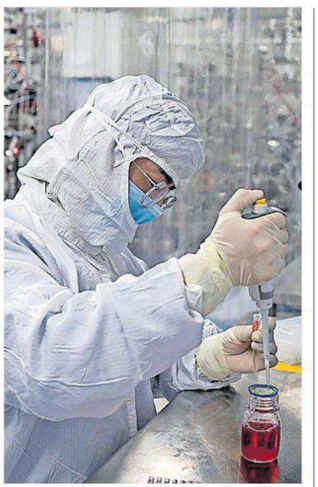
> There will be plenty of gaps for a rogue state or terrorist to exploit

Yet the pace of the advance is now outrunning the capacity of businesses and governments to cope with the downside. Demis Hassabis, Britain's own AI mogul, spoke in May of being "in the foothills of the singularity" — the point at which technological progress accelerates beyond human ability to predict or control.

Our country, thanks to Rishi Sunak, is the best placed of any to monitor the behaviour and safety of AI models. The AI Security Institute he set up is globally respected and doing vital work. Two weeks ago, for instance, it revealed that AI agents powered by US models started a hacking campaign against real people even while they were being tested. The Trump administration, anxious to stay ahead of China at any cost, has been slower to act, but what has happened in recent weeks has shaken it into action.

The White House has now adopted a voluntary framework for testing the risks of new frontier models. And at the G7 summit in France, leaders discussed how western nations could work together. Meanwhile, China has signed up Russia, Iran and others to establish a World AI Co-operation Organisation. It is not hard to see what will happen. With different, sometimes voluntary regimes, and little co-ordination between the US and China, there will be plenty of gaps for the rogue state, or cybercriminal, or terrorist group, to exploit. No wonder the Five Eyes have made an urgent statement.

While every business must act quickly on these dangers, there are some things only governments can do. That is particularly true on what AI's greatest proponents themselves regard as the biggest threat — the misuse of AI to create new diseases or biological weapons. In June, a second highly unusual statement was issued, this time by most of the arch-rival tech leaders of OpenAI, Anthropic, Google and Meta. It is worth reading in full the key sentence on which they found unusual unity: "AI systems are improving rapidly, and alongside incredible benefits to science and medicine, there is a real possibility that the knowledge barriers which have historically prevented bad actors from obtaining biological weapons will meaningfully erode".



AI bosses warn that "bad actors" may be able to obtain biological weapons

Those are words written with great care, by the very top people in AI. They called for very specific laws, immediately, to require mandatory screening of customers for genetic material and the equipment to make it.

Illustrating the point, Stanford University researchers have just created completely new viruses, not found in nature, using AI. These viruses attack bacteria and cannot harm humans. They could be a breakthrough in treating drug-resistant infections. Yet the implications of being able to create an entire functioning genome from scratch are profound. It is still a big step further to create a virus to attack humans. The more imminent threat is the modification of existing pathogens through "gain of function". But the central point of both the unusual recent statements, from the Five Eyes and AI leaders, is that capabilities are moving on very rapidly and they could fall into the wrong hands.

The US has woken up to some of the dangers. Last month it announced new rules to restrict gain-of-function research, but with vague wording and no specific reference to AI risks. Again, technology is likely to outrun the creation of new rules. In Britain, governments have recognised the danger, for example by creating a new Microbial Forensics Consortium to identify biological hazards. But the new cabinet would be wise to beef up our defences with great speed.

We should introduce mandatory screening of DNA synthesis activity in place of voluntary arrangements today and call on other countries to do the same. Ask Nato to invest more in biosecurity through its innovation fund and agree common action to deter future threats. Listen to the Centre for Long-Term Resilience and start piloting the sampling of wastewater at ports and airports now to detect pathogens early and then expand that within the country to provide rapid tracking of infectious diseases. For relatively small sums of money, critical defences could be put in place.

The events of the past few weeks are clear: AI is moving rapidly but its governance is not keeping up. The opportunities are vast but the dangers are imminent. The words of the Five Eyes, "those who delay face growing and avoidable risk", were addressed to business. They apply to governments as well.

GUIDED TOUR ONLY

Highlights of the Amalfi Coast

August to November 2026 and March to December 2027

Live la dolce vita for a week, exploring the best of the Amalfi Coast, one of the most dramatic stretches of coastline in Europe. Whether travelling to chic Capri by boat, admiring dreamy coastal views from the Path of the Gods, or exploring romantic Ravello, you'll be spellbound by the natural beauty and cultural treasures of this land. Based at a family-run hotel in the quieter village of Agerola, you'll also visit the most famous sites in the Bay of Naples, namely the extraordinarily well-preserved ruins of Herculaneum and the legendary archaeological site of Pompeii.

Contact us today to add flights to this package.

What's included
- Seven nights' three-star hotel
- Daily breakfast, one lunch and six dinners
- Guided tours of Herculaneum, Pompeii
- Visits to Positano and Capri by boat
- Sightseeing around Amalfi and Ravello
- Walk part of the divine Path of the Gods
- Overseas transport throughout
- Times+ members save £100^
  Visit thetimes.com/timesplus for your unique code

Call 0808 159 4306 or visit thetimes.com/th-amalficoast TIMES Holidays

Terms and conditions apply. *Price shown is per person, tour only (excludes flights) and based on two adults sharing on December 26, 2026 departure. Single supplement an additional £340pp. Price correct as of August 17, 2026 and subject to change and availability. Price excludes mandatory local taxes/resort fees payable locally (amount varies by destination). ^£100 off Times+ offer applicable to each Times Holidays booking made by December 31, 2026 with a minimum spend of £2,000 when quoting your unique Times+ code. Visit thetimes.com/timesplus for full terms and conditions. Offers and bookings are subject to availability, see supplier website for full T&C's. This holiday is sold by Times Holidays as an agent for Exodus Travels and protected under ABTA P8770. For full booking conditions, visit thetimes.com/holidays/terms-and-conditions.

ABTA Travel with confidence ABTA No.P8770

Comment

If you want marriage rights, get married

New plans for cohabiting couples would force people into legal obligations without their consent

Melanie Phillips

@MELANIELATEST

Did you know that the government wants to create a new legal framework for cohabiting couples and invited the public to comment on its plan? No? Well, too late now. The consultation, which started on June 5, closed on August 14. It's not surprising if this is the first you've heard of it.

The proposal was slipped out by the Starmer government on a Friday afternoon. This is a traditional manoeuvre by ministers hoping that no one will actually notice a proposal that's likely to spark opposition.

Last month, a Survation poll of 2,060 adults found that 72 per cent had heard little or nothing about this proposal, and only 37 per cent supported it once it was explained.

The lack of enthusiasm is also hardly surprising. The government is proposing that couples who either live together for three years or have a child together would automatically acquire marriage-like rights and obligations for which they never asked.

If the relationship ends, either partner could ask the courts to award them a share of the home or the other partner's pension, property and other assets. The measure would also grant automatic inheritance rights to cohabitants if their partner dies without leaving a will. That means the surviving partner could claim the inheritance that the deceased had earmarked for their children by a previous relationship. This would all happen without the other partner consenting or even knowing that this might ever occur.

The proposal is an authoritarian coup against personal freedom. In a free society, the principle of consent is fundamental. Its absence is unjust and coercive.

Currently, people can choose between marriage, civil partnership or cohabitation. Selecting the latter is to choose a relationship with no legal framework. That choice would now be overridden. Cohabitants could opt out; but that means both partners must agree, obtain independent legal advice, fully disclose their finances and sign a formal legal agreement. Why should they be forced to take long, costly and unpredictable action to protect themselves against possible state-imposed injustice or harm?

> Ignorance of the law is no reason to change it to serve the ignorant

The government says that 3.5 million couples now live together without marrying. But at what point will it deem a three-year cohabitation to have actually begun? As Lord Wolfson KC asked in the House of Lords, would it be when the couple first stayed together most nights, when they gave up one of their properties, when they opened a joint bank account or when they began introducing each other as partners?

Since there is no single, decisive test for determining whether two people are living together as a couple, the measure would increase uncertainty for cohabitants and provoke arbitrary rulings by the courts.

Although this legal framework could be applied to either sex, the government frames it as strengthening the rights of women who have become financially disadvantaged during a cohabiting relationship. But this reflects a remarkably backwards view of women as dependent on men. As Baroness Deech told the Lords, millions of women, particularly those who have been widowed or divorced, choose to cohabit because they value their financial independence.

Under the proposed change, if the man walks out or the woman kicks him out she may find that he demands half the assets of the business she has built. Even for women who are financially dependent on their partner, scant protection will be offered by having to embark on costly litigation to extract from him a meagre amount of money, much of which will be creamed off in legal costs.

For decades, there has been repeated pressure — mainly from family lawyers — to give cohabitants rights and responsibilities similar to marriage. The main argument has always been that many cohabitants don't realise that they have no legal rights to claim from each other, and so millions of people expect protections that the law doesn't provide.

This is deemed unfair. But why? Ignorance of the law is no reason to change it to meet the demands of the ignorant. If people are upset that they don't enjoy the rights and responsibilities of marriage, there's an obvious remedy. They can get married.

Giving cohabitants the rights and responsibilities of married couples undermines marriage itself by bestowing its benefits without the sacrifices involved in the commitment to each other that marriage entails. Cohabitants who say they're just as committed, but in a relationship they can easily leave, demonstrate they don't understand what real commitment is.

Marriage may have lost its normative status but it remains essential for individual and cultural health. Cohabitants break up more readily than married couples, divorce more readily if they do go on to marry, have a higher incidence of domestic violence and their children have relatively worse outcomes.

Yet since the 1980s, the anti-marriage ratchet has been relentlessly turning. Living together, illegitimacy and unmarried motherhood progressively lost their stigma. "Lifestyle choice" and the social acceptability of cohabitation as an alternative to marriage proceeded to become unchallengeable.

Pressure has subsequently risen to bestow the benefits of marriage upon un-marriage, thus further incentivising a cultural shift fuelling mass fatherlessness, female poverty and domestic abuse.

Now, though, the ratchet has spun out of control, with a proposal that would in effect be a state-imposed marriage-type contract forced upon the beneficiaries of the revolt against it. Such irony and thoughtlessness are a marriage made in hell.

THUNDERER

New glasses aren't so smart without strict privacy rules

Tom Davies

Like most entrepreneurs, I adore innovation. I've not only designed glasses from crushed meteorites but also colour-changing frames and even a pair that smells of "giraffe's milk". So when I first heard about smart glasses, I was excited. A decade ago, a tech giant asked me to help it develop embryonic smart frames. Then another came knocking. At that point, I told both firms the technology wasn't quite ready.

But now it is. And that changes everything. Instead of reaching for our phones, smart glasses allow us to do all the same digital tasks — access maps, check emails, interact with AI assistants and live broadcast whatever we're seeing in real time.

Meta sold more than 7 million pairs of smart glasses last year. It's expected 100 million people will be wearing them within years. Apple, Google, Samsung and Snap are all soon launching their own versions. As an eyewear designer, this is potentially great news. Nearly everyone wears sunglasses and most of us over the age of 40 will need an optical lens. Could smart glasses become as ubiquitous as phones or watches? Yes please.

However, it's not quite that simple. The biggest issue, as we often see with technology, is privacy. As a society, we're accustomed to CCTV on streets. But cameras are fixed, visible, regulated. Smart glasses are mobile, discreet and, currently, unregulated. Imagine having your likeness fed into a facial-recognition database after being filmed on a stranger's live stream to which you'd never consented. One especially pernicious ruse doing the rounds near my Chelsea store is smart glasses-wearing influencers provoking confrontations in high-end boutiques, then posting them on social media. I haven't fallen victim yet but pity those who have.

The big manufacturers insist safeguards are in place. Meta's Ray-Bans have an LED that glows when recording. But what if that doesn't work, is hacked or misused? In March, two Swedish newspapers revealed that footage captured by Meta's smart glasses, including users undressing and engaging in sexual activity, had been reviewed by contractors in Kenya. And aside from the major players, what about all the unbranded, cheaper pairs already flooding Amazon or Alibaba?

All too often we've seen technology sprint ahead before regulation has left the starting blocks, let alone legislation. The UK's digital services tax didn't come into force until 2020, years after online marketplaces uprooted the retail industry. Last week Meta glasses were banned from courts in England and Wales, but there's no specific legislation and no clear rules on what can be recorded in public. Without these, smart glasses risk making fools of us all.

Tom Davies is founder of tdtomdavies.com

Lesley Thomas Notebook

I hear you, baby... time to get my ears tested

Specsavers has, quite cleverly, enlisted the UK dance music duo Groove Armada to help save the hearing of those old enough to remember the second summer of love. If you can't put a song to the band name, you have surely danced along to the lyrics "I see you baby, shakin' that ass". "Forever young" Generation X, still going to raves (daytime ones), festivals and neck-deep in midlife can be reluctant to accept the conventions of ageing.

For some reason, I was targeted with the Specsavers ad featuring these two fiftysomething electronic music heavyweights, talking about the head-in-the-speakers glory days of the 1990s. If they can't persuade me to get my ears tested, no one can.

Joy of donkey work

Have you ever scooped up donkey poo? I'm new to the game but I would gladly take it up as a hobby. Dung collection was a highlight of a thrillingly lazy holiday in rural Normandy last week with a group of friends.

I won't go as far as to say we were fighting over this task when staying on our friends' farm, but this was the most popular job to volunteer for. The scooping instrument is much like one of those Zen-garden rakes — perfect for this meditative, satisfying task as the middle man between three highly productive animals and a large vegetable patch. The product is surprisingly unstinky, which makes all the difference.

Feel free to get in touch if you have donkeys you need help with — especially if you live in south London.

Icy reception

I've stayed in France a lot but this was the first time I had noticed that the French don't have the same relationship with ice that we do. A few of us were dispatched to get emergency afternoon supplies from the nearest supermarché. A couple of bags of ice were on the list — those freezer trays could never keep up with a dozen thirsty Brits *en vacances* in searing heat with an appetite for G and T.

The vast Intermarché had sold out. As we all know, French shops are very specific about what they do and don't sell, so finding the right smaller outlet was a quest. We were directed to try the bakery in the next village. Of course we discovered that the *glace* the patisserie was selling was ice cream, not ice. French: so many ways to say "falling in love" but can't spare an extra word for ice cream, or lawyer (*avocat*, which also means avocado). Yes, I know that *glaçon* is the word for an individual ice cube but this is not the point.

After a salted-caramel side quest, we pressed on. A slightly sneery propriétaire at a convention-busting tabac said he did have ice, and asked why we wanted it — were we American? "Ah, English! For your beer?!" *Très drôle.* He had three of those little plastic ice cube sheets. When we asked for all of them, it was as though we were taking 100 cigarette packets off his hands.

Relating this story to a Parisian acquaintance, he agreed that our need for so much ice was strange. For us, if we want a cold drink, he said, we just keep it in the fridge. This makes perfect sense. But also — it really doesn't.

Computer says no

Not to be a Victor Meldrew about this, but e-commerce, once one of the great conveniences of modern life, has become so automated that it's stressful and wasteful. Flowers turning up the day after the birthday, half-alive; Christmas presents that never make it out of China; packages hurled on to doorsteps and eaten by foxes.

Buying a new pedal bin for my mum, I accidentally ordered two from John Lewis — usually an oasis of peace on the internet. There was no way to cancel online so I spent half an hour trying to get through to a human. But even they couldn't override the system, apart from suggesting we send one of them back. I might return to actual shops.

Giles Coren is away

@LESLEYTHOMAS

Buy prints or signed copies of Times cartoons from our Print Gallery at timescartoons.com or call 0800 912 7136

Keep universities weird: it's what they're for

Let's be proud that the scholarly freedom behind great advances includes both the esoteric genius and the useless crank

Pratinav Anil

There is an unfortunate cadence to British public life, by which the discovery that an institution is imperfect is swiftly followed by the conclusion that it ought perhaps never to have existed. The BBC, civil service, Church of England and the House of Lords have all been led before the tumbril. Now, courtesy of the Jason Arday affair, universities find themselves rattling towards the same doomed destination.

I can hardly complain, having given the cart a push myself. Mea culpa. In a New Statesman cover story last week, I argued that Arday's frictionless ascent exposed a university culture increasingly in hock to celebrity, the cult of "lived experience" and a particularly patronising declension of anti-racism, as old-fashioned standards by which to assess scholarly chops fell by the wayside.

But if Arday was under-scrutinised on his way up, he was undoubtedly over-scrutinised on his way down, with every boast excavated, every biographical claim collated and every printed sentence subjected to the sort of textual criticism usually reserved for the cantos of *La Divina Commedia*. Unquestionably, race had something to do with it. But that an academic should become an object of sustained national fascination also owed something to a familiar reflex among those who already have it in for universities.

A scandal concerning one appointment has duly hardened into an indictment of universities *tout court*. Sympathy for the sector is scarce across the spectrum anyway. The right sees Islamists and diversity commissars; the left, tuition fees and thwarted social mobility; the Treasury, a bloated invoice presented to the taxpayer. From every quarter comes the same impatient question: what, exactly, are universities for?

Perhaps this is the moment for a heretical answer. Universities ought to explain themselves rather less to the rest of us. Indeed, they ought to become more elitist, more eccentric, more difficult and more tolerant of uselessness. Elitism, admittedly, requires redefinition. There was little admirable about the social elitism of the old university. As Mary Beard has recently reminded us in the TLS, nostalgia for some vanished meritocratic academy is largely fantasy. Women and the lower orders were scarcely being ruthlessly selected on intellectual merit in the common rooms of yore. Much of Oxbridge was geared towards shepherding not especially bright young things of the right breeding towards the undemanding "gentleman's third".

The great achievement of the past century was to dismantle much of this social exclusiveness while extending access to the intellectual culture that had once been its preserve. Somewhere along the way, however, democratising access came to imply dumbing down, and hostility to an elite caste shaded into embarrassment about intellectual elitism.

Here I find myself drawn to a little Reithian paternalism. John Reith's interwar BBC proceeded from the rather grand assumption that

> They ought to become more elitist, more eccentric, more difficult

people might profit from being given things they had not thought to ask for: Shakespeare and symphonies, philosophy lectures and foreign languages, mixed in with the weather forecast and dance bands. The university rests on much the same civilising conceit, taking what was once the intellectual property of a narrow tribe and throwing it open to everyone.

The same presumption should govern what scholars are allowed to study. Intellectual life advances through enthusiasms that can look preposterous from outside: Akkadian art, Poussin's Arcadian visions, Cartesian dualism, cartography. History, my discipline, has made some of its greatest leaps by poking around in subjects that would have struggled before a provincial committee of penny-pinching mandarins. Keith Thomas took witches and magic seriously and, in doing so, recovered something of a vanished mental world. Carlo Ginzburg found another in the life of a 16th-century Friulian miller who thought the cosmos had formed rather like cheese and worms. This is often how scholarship moves forward: someone gets wildly interested in something everyone else has passed over.

And these scholarly enthusiasms do occasionally escape the library. It ought to be a matter of national pride that British universities have produced generations of scholars whose work has helped other countries understand their own pasts. Take Theodore Zeldin on France or Sir Richard Evans on Germany or Paul Ginsborg on Italy, all of whom are read in translation in the countries whose histories they made their own. Continental readers have long encountered their pasts through British historians, even as the traffic in the opposite direction has been markedly thinner. It would be a bizarre act of national self-harm to undermine the institutions that have made this pleasing asymmetry possible.

The price of such freedom, of course, is a great deal of dross. Universities teem with bad books and batty ideas that would test the tolerance of a Voltaire. A good thing too. The freedom that gives us Ginzburg must also extend to the nutjob whose monograph sinks deservedly without trace.

I felt something of the same principle while writing a doctorate on secularism in India, which required me to spend some months reading Islamists, some of them at British universities, whose politics I found reprehensible. Cambridge has lately had its own controversy over Farah Ahmed, an assistant research professor whose objections to liberal democracy led her to invidiously, odiously yoke together the legalisation of homosexuality and the bombing of Iraq.

None of this strikes me as an argument for purging universities. Better to keep bad ideas where they can be contradicted and, when necessary, crucified in the review pages. I would sooner cross historiographical swords with a crank than have a committee or cancelling mob save me the trouble.

Pratinav Anil teaches history at the University of Oxford

James Marriott is away

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@thetimes.co.uk or by post to 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

Lifelong learning

Sir, In the era of the 11+ the results were skewed to favour boys because it was felt the exam worked against them; girls were thought to be more able linguistically. Now, 50 years on, Professor Alan Smithers is questioning whether girls might have an "inherent advantage" in some subjects and boys in others (report, Aug 17). Apart from stating what every teacher knows and exam results demonstrate, Professor Smithers also argues that schools will be unable to provide a more skills-based curriculum. That is because they lack specialist teachers — which is the fault of teacher training and university education departments not offering the courses rather than students not valuing them. However, when girls opt for vocational courses, will the results be skewed again to favour the boys?
Janice Ketley
Ex-teacher, Englefield Green, Surrey

Sir, Libby Purves (Aug 17) is right to remind us that education is a lifelong process. As metaphorical caps are tossed into the air on receipt of A-level results and, for some, formal education is concluded with a whoop of relief, it's important to remember that school is more than a means to an end. Teachers have done a good job if they have encouraged students to be curious about people and ideas. That is the basis of learning. It's thrilling, satisfying and useful.
Gareth Parker-Jones
Head master, Rugby School

Sir, Education is both the gateway to a more fulfilling life and the best defence against the mendacities of populism. Sadly the functioning adult education system we had in the 1990s — LEA centres, university extra-mural departments, further education colleges — has been shredded by austerity policies and all we have left is the brave lifelong learning charity University of the Third Age. Surely u3a is a model upon which a creative education secretary can rebuild.
Bill Jones
Director, extra-mural studies, Manchester University 1986-93; Beverley, E Yorks

Right sort of leader

Sir, When Aneurin Bevan referred in the 1950s to the Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell as a "desiccated calculating machine" (Daily Quiz, Aug 17, question 9) he meant it as an insult, not as a description of the "right kind" of Labour leader.
Rodney Brazier
Emeritus professor of constitutional law, University of Manchester

Corrections and clarifications

ipso. Regulated *The Times* takes complaints about editorial content seriously. We are committed to abiding by the Independent Press Standards Organisation ("IPSO") rules and regulations and the Editors' Code of Practice that IPSO enforces. Requests for corrections or clarifications should be sent to feedback@thetimes.co.uk

Repairing our damage to the natural world

Sir, I am a retired agronomist and have seen first hand many of the effects Jenni Russell mentions ("Nature suffers most in this deadly drought", Aug 17), especially those driven by a desire to "improve" agriculture. No doubt many of these schemes were well intentioned but the long-term consequences for soil health, water purity and environmental issues were not always foreseen. Likewise, with the increasing risk of wildfires, the main focus is invariably the danger to life and property — which is understandable — but the long-term effects on flora and fauna are usually secondary and could take a lot longer to recover. Jenni's article should be a wake-up call that we ignore such things at our peril. Nature is very resilient but at times like this it will need some extra help.
Patrick Mulcahy
Henley on Thames, Oxon

Sir, Jenni Russell rightly highlights an under-recognised effect of the new conditions brought to Britain by the climate emergency: "a silent nature apocalypse". Her exhortation to Times readers to do what they can individually in supplying food and water is welcome, but we clearly need large-scale systemic change, as represented in my private member's Nature's Rights Bill that was debated in the House of Lords in July.

The moral arguments for nature's rights within an integrated rights framework are strong; but as Russell hints, such rights can also be argued for from a basis of human self-interest. The economy — our society — survives and flourishes only within the framework of a flourishing nature world. There are no jobs on a dead planet, and no food security in the conditions we are already facing.
Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle
Green Party leader 2012-16

Sir, I think Jenni Russell needs a little perspective. Yes, wildlife is having a tough time like every other UK resident, but you can guarantee that foxes, hares, rabbits and deer get the whiff of a forest fire before we do, and either scarper or, where appropriate, stay underground. The other thing to remember is that the heatwave of 1976 was worse than this. It followed a long, dry summer and winter in 1975. Rivers and reservoirs disappeared completely. Roads melted. Standpipes were erected on many street corners and Denis Howell was appointed minister for drought. Even Big Ben broke down in a shower of nuts and bolts. So, 2026? "Luxury!" as Monty Python's Yorkshiremen might say.
Tony Francis
Chesham

Sir, Your otherwise excellent editorial "Fire and Water" (Aug 17) omitted to mention one glaring problem with the water supply system in England and Wales, namely that about 40 per cent of households connected to the mains do not have water meters. WaterSafe, the accreditation organisation for plumbers, states that households with meters tend to use between 10 per cent and 20 per cent less water. Offering financial incentives or extending the Energy Performance Certificate system to encourage the installation of meters would provide a quick win in reducing water consumption, and presumably make it easier to identify where leaks are occurring.
Edmund Hayward
Llandrindod Wells, Powys

Letters to The Times must be exclusive and may be edited. Please include a full address and daytime phone number.

GP referrals fear

Sir, Further to your report "Warnings of cancer care delay as 'quarter of GP referrals rejected' " (Aug 17), it is a great concern that about a quarter of GP referrals for a clinical specialist opinion are being rejected and only advice is given. GPs have their own pathway of long postgraduate training and should be expert in detecting early signs of serious disease. They also have access to batteries of tests that they may use before referral, so secondary care referrals occur when further specialist expertise is needed.

When I wanted advice I asked for it, and when I felt a patient needed to be seen then they were seen. The GP, at this stage, is the only doctor with clinical knowledge of the patient and it is dangerous for another professional who has never seen the patient to override the referral with advice. It also contributes to anxiety and dissatisfaction in the patient.

We know that this country lags behind most western countries in cancer survival and a large part of this is because of delay in diagnosis. The last thing the NHS should be doing is putting up barriers to valid pathways of clinical care. Other than in exceptional cases, a GP's request for hospital face-to-face care and investigation should be respected and acted on, otherwise we will struggle to improve specialist care outcomes.
Dr Hugh Savill
Ret'd GP, Tiverton, Devon

Social care reform

Sir, Your report on families losing six-figure sums to dementia care ("Mum worked into her 70s. Her £250k savings were lost to dementia care", Aug 15) exposes the central unfairness that social care reform must address. The problem is not that people are expected to contribute towards their care, it is that nobody knows whether they will need modest support for a short period or intensive care costing tens of thousands of pounds a year for many years. That is not a risk one can sensibly plan for alone. A lasting settlement should distinguish between costs people can reasonably be expected to meet and catastrophic costs that should be shared across society. That was central to the logic of the Dilnot proposals, and remains so.

A diagnosis of dementia should not become a financial catastrophe. If the government wants a durable settlement, putting a limit on that risk is a good place to start.
Paul Burstow
Minister for care 2010-12; Wadhurst, E Sussex

Salmon in Thames

Sir, Further to Ed Strang's piece "Gone fishing — in the heart of London" (Aug 15), I give fly-casting lessons on the Thames and have seen three salmon in six years, two in the past 18 months and a kelt was caught in the River Wandle, a tributary of the Thames, in late January of last year. Salmon are a remarkable species as they overcome huge adversity in the sea before returning to their original rivers. They have to contend with appalling pollution, parasitic lice from open-net salmon farming, super-trawlers and increased predation from seals. That they are still present in the Thames is testament to their sheer will to survive; it should be seen as a symbol of hope, to inspire us all never to give up.
Edward Thomson
Association of Advanced Professional Game Angling Instructors

READERS RECALL THE TREMORS

FROM THE TIMES AUGUST 18, 1926

Further reports of the earth tremors felt early on August 15 have reached us from correspondents in many parts of the country. Extracts from their letters appear below.

The earthquake tremors felt in so many parts of England were also felt here in Dorset. I was awakened early on Sunday morning by my bed rocking. For the moment, between sleeping and waking, I thought it was someone shaking it, but the next, having experienced earthquake shocks both in India and Sicily, I said to myself: "Earthquake". The rocking of the bed and jingle of a small ornament on the mantelpiece went on for some seconds, and very shortly after it stopped, the clock struck 5. Mrs CH Candy, Dorset.

The earthquake was felt by many here at 5am. I was awake and felt two distinct shocks, and windows rattled violently. There was no noise at all. Mr MJ Leake, King's Lynn.

The earthquake shock reported in your issue of Monday was distinctly felt in this town at 5am on the 15th inst. It was noticed by many people, but does not appear to have caused damage. Mr Charles W Hewgill, Gainsborough, Lincs.

I was awake soon after 4, and was reading from half-past. As I always have my window curtains drawn back, it was quite light, and so I could see everything clearly; otherwise at two minutes to 5 I should have thought there must have been someone under my bed, raising it up, and walking about and making the boards creak. Then next came a noise as if a big lorry were going up the hill outside our garden. Mr SS Vaughan Jenkins, Southampton.

● Appreciable progress was made with the raising of the Hindenburg. The ship, however, is taking an increased list to port as the water is being pumped out of her. A staff photographer of The Times has been down five decks. On his first descent he suddenly realized, when far removed from the exit, that he had less than half an inch of candle left to enable him to reach the main deck. The candle went out just as he saw daylight dim in the distance. On his next descent he carried a larger supply of candles and took the additional precaution of paying out a ball of twine, so that, if the candles failed, he could always find his way out by following the string.

THETIMES.COM/ARCHIVE

Housing solution

Sir, Neil Mendoza (Thunderer, Aug 17) is right to highlight the potential of historic buildings to help to address Britain's housing shortage. But if we are serious about making better use of the buildings we already have, the government must address a financial system that continues to favour demolition and new construction over reuse. The most obvious example is VAT. Repairing, adapting and reusing an existing building generally attracts VAT at 20 per cent, while most new-build housing is zero-rated. Whatever the rationale for this distinction when it was introduced decades ago, it makes little sense today.
Leanne Tritton, Richard Nelson and Will Hurst
Co-founders, Don't Waste Buildings

Numbskull shorts

Sir, Sarah Ditum is right to suggest that public information films should be resurrected ("Help me, please, to educate these numbskulls", Aug 15). In the past few years there appears to have been a growth in the number of drivers sitting in their vehicle with the engine running; their excuses range from "My phone won't work unless the engine is on" to "The battery is low on charge". This may be true in some cases but I wonder if people realise it causes pollution, and that the hot weather makes it much worse. Numbskulls will always be with us but hopefully they watch television, in which case all TV stations should be required to show these films.
Marion Elder
Aldershot, Surrey

Politicians' palace

Sir, Emma Duncan asks what use could be made of Buckingham Palace ("Admit it Charles, Buckingham Palace is hideous", Aug 14). How about relocating both Houses of Parliament? There must be stacks of suitable space sufficiently grand to impress, the security would be excellent and there would still be room for royal dinners and garden parties. The best of the poorly hung art could be distributed to public galleries, where it would be seen by many more people.
Mike Davison
Cheltenham

Brilliant Bayeux

Sir, Laura Freeman's article "No tickets for the real thing? Britain's Bayeux Tapestry is almost as good" (Aug 15) was timely. Even if you can get to see the original at the British Museum, you will be allowed only 40 minutes, and of course it will be crowded. When I went to see the Reading replica last month I spent more than two hours studying it, and during that time there were no more than 20 people there. It is beautifully displayed with informative labelling. It provides a perfect introduction to the real thing — and it is free to visit.
Tim Simon
London NW1

Soft on soft-tops

Sir, I disagree with Giles Coren ("I used to worship cars but I've been converted", Aug 15). I'm an older female and I love my convertible. They're not just for men or speed freaks — some of us like the fresh air when we drive. I just wish they'd make an electric one.
Sharon Cavendish
London N2

Daily Universal Register

The Office for National Statistics gives data on the UK labour market; the Department for Work and Pensions releases figures for the number of people on universal credit.

Nature notes

The plums and damsons ripening in hedgerows have a faint bloom on their skins. Epicuticular wax, which occurs on grapes and blueberries too, helps to protect the flesh from drying out in the sun, as well as keeping fungal spores and pathogens at bay. If wiped away, the fruit will quickly spoil. Also known as pruinescence, this bloom occurs on succulent plants and on certain insects, where it is thought to improve thermoregulation by reflecting UV rays. Many male dragonflies, including broad-bodied chasers, develop pruinescence on their abdomens, which then appear pale blue; males spend more time than females in full sun, patrolling their territories. Females often develop some underneath, protecting their reproductive organs from light reflecting upwards from water.
MELISSA HARRISON

Birthdays today

Emerald Fennell, *pictured*, actress, *The Crown* (2019-20), director and writer, *Wuthering Heights* (2026), 41; **Sir Philip Barton**, permanent under-secretary, Foreign Office (2020-25, head of HM Diplomatic Service), 63; **Nicola Bayley**, writer and illustrator, *Katje the Windmill Cat* (2001), 77; **Carole Bouquet**, actress, *For Your Eyes Only* (1981), 69; **Victoria Coren Mitchell**, TV presenter, *Only Connect* (BBC2), and poker player, 54; **Dennis Elliott**, drummer, founder member of Foreigner (1976-93), 76; **Javier Ferrán**, chairman, International Consolidated Airlines Group (parent company of British Airways), 70; **Andy Haldane**, president, British Chambers of Commerce, and chancellor, University of Sheffield, chief executive, Royal Society for Arts (2021-25), chief economist, Bank of England (2014-21), 59; **Vernon Hill**, founder and chairman (2013-19), Metro Bank, 81; **Sir Tim Holroyde**, lord justice of appeal (2017-25), 71; **Stanley Johnson**, author, *The Marburg Virus* (1982), Conservative MEP (1979-84), 86; **Nick Leslau**, founder and chairman of the Prestbury group (includes Thorpe Park, Alton Towers, Warwick Castle), 67; **Mika**, singer-songwriter and TV presenter, *The Piano*, 43; **Edward Norton**, actor, *Fight Club* (1999), 57; **Roman Polanski**, film director, *The Pianist* (2002), 93; **Cindy Rose**, chief executive, WPP (advertising group), 61; **Mohammad Sarwar**, first Muslim MP in Britain (Labour 1997-2010), governor of Punjab, Pakistan (2013-15, 2018-22), 74; **Sir John Scarlett**, chairman, Bletchley Park Trust (2012-19), chief, Secret Intelligence Service (2004-09), 78; **Cameron Smith**, golfer, 33; **Madeleine Stowe**, actress, *Twelve Monkeys* (1995), 68.

On this day

In **1941** the National Fire Service was formed, combining the UK's auxiliary fire services. By 1943 more than 70,000 women had enrolled, becoming fire watchers and drivers and managing communications networks. In 1948 fire services reverted to local authority control.

The last word

"A hero is the one who does what he can. The others don't." Romain Rolland, French writer, Nobel prizewinner, *Jean-Christophe* (1904-12)

Reforming Welfare

The UK's benefits bill is growing apace, to the point where it is no longer sustainable. But Robert Jenrick's plan to cut payments is stronger on headlines than savings

The vexed question of Britain's swelling welfare bill haunts the Treasury balance sheet with growing insistence. Of particular concern is the rising cost of the personal independence payment (Pip) programme for disability or poor health. In 2024-25 the cost of Pip alone stood at £26 billion. It is expected to rise to more than £41 billion by 2030.

Within this, a new and worrying aspect has been the escalation in younger people claiming Pip on mental health grounds such as anxiety and depression, and conditions such as ADHD and autism. The payment is intended to help with the costs of disability and can be granted to those both in and out of work. Yet evidence already suggests that the longer an 18 to 24-year-old spends on Pip, and its related benefits, the worse their long-term employment prospects become.

Some work on evaluating the welfare system is already under way. At the government's request, Sir Stephen Timms is investigating Pip provision, to conclude this autumn. Alan Milburn's review on young people not in education, employment or training, or Neets, will also report later this year.

Yet as the government circles its options — and mulls on what reforms it can get past resistant Labour backbenchers — Nigel Farage's Reform UK has sprung out of the starting traps with a 50-page plan to slash the welfare bill by £50 billion, with changes to disability provision slated to make up £22 billion of that saving.

Among the policies announced by the party's Treasury spokesman, Robert Jenrick, is a plan to abolish Pip and the health element of Universal Credit entirely. They would be replaced with a new, regularly reviewed "health security allowance" for the "gravely ill and severely challenged". Businesses would be required to pay for sick employees for two years, with a cut in employers' national insurance contributions to compensate. Mr Jenrick estimated that under these reforms, 2.16 million claimants would keep their present entitlement in full, while 2.89 million would see it modified or withdrawn. It remains to be seen if this plan survives contact with electoral reality, since a relatively high proportion of Reform voters are also dependent on welfare.

Another centrepiece of the Reform policy is to exclude foreign nationals from most UK benefits, including those European Union citizens with settled status in the UK. While debate on the details of welfare is welcome, there are questions over the efficacy of Reform's remedy. Its proposal to deny all foreigners benefits, a calculated bang on the populist drum, ignores the fact that most foreign nationals don't qualify in the first place: UK visas stipulate "no recourse to public funds". Those who do have mostly either been accepted as refugees or have indefinite leave to remain status (ILR). The majority of foreigners entitled to welfare are the 4.3 million EU citizens who have been in the UK for many years. To exclude them would mean ripping up the reciprocal Brexit deal that also allows 1.3 million Britons based in the EU access to benefits in their host countries. It could prove pointless, too, since those with ILR have a near-certain chance of being granted British citizenship should they apply.

While long-term changes to welfare are considered, sensible short-term measures should be put in place. The process itself must be strengthened against those seeking to game the system, with assessments conducted face-to-face, and regular reassessments. More emphasis should be on targeted help rather than impersonal cash payouts, with fresh thinking on offering services such as therapy, physical aids and employment support. Yet for those with severe needs who rely most on such benefits, the payment is a lifeline, and change must bear their continuity of care in mind. En route to a better system, political parties should avoid plans that generate more headlines than savings.

Losing Game

Vladimir Putin is struggling to justify his financially ruinous war against Ukraine

Russia's money men are rattled and the Kremlin should be too. The country's economy is exhausted, flattened almost, by its nearly five-year war with Ukraine. Now, figures in the financial community are warning not only about the long-term impact on the country's prosperity but also the danger of a politically explosive "social crisis".

War economies, of course, entail massive defence spending, state subsidies and labour shortages. The invasion of Ukraine has cost both blood and treasure on an immense scale and Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, cannot mask the fact that the defence sector has been force-fed at the expense of a frustrated civilian market. Mr Putin is currently having to campaign across the country to prop up his party, United Russia, in September's Duma election. These parliamentary votes are of course carefully engineered to secure a result that can be presented as a triumph. As a precaution, Mr Putin has banned Yabloko, the one party that argues publicly against his war. The president may soon go a step further and crack down on those in the banking world who point to the deepening cost of a conflict with as yet no end in sight.

Andrei Klepach, chief economist at the VEB state development corporation, told a discussion club at the Moscow stock exchange that Russia was destined to lose out in a protracted conflict. "We will not win this competition in a war of attrition," he said. "We have this illusion that everything [in Ukraine] will collapse. It has not collapsed, and it will not." When this heresy was leaked, Mr Klepach — who was merely voicing a broader consensus within Russia's banking community — was promptly fired.

Mr Klepach's mortal sin was to link the ruinous economics of the war with potential social unrest, comparing the present situation to the pre-revolutionary climate in 1917 that resulted in the toppling of the tsar. Political faultlines are beginning to emerge. Within the Kremlin, economic technocrats are pitted against the defence establishment. Mr Putin himself has demanded that the finance ministry slash civilian spending in favour of the war effort. Businessmen tend to prefer capital flight to open defiance.

Russia's official GDP growth forecast has been cut to between 0 and 1 per cent for 2026. Meanwhile, the central bank is warning of stagflation and the fiscal deficit is widening as the mounting costs of the war are compounded by depressed energy revenues. Mr Putin is increasingly going to have to choose between military spending and bailouts. Small companies are loaded with debt. Defence contractors borrow at state-subsidised interest rates while commercial borrowers have to stump up rates of 24 per cent or more. Personal bankruptcies have reached record levels. Ukraine's drone attacks on the Wildberries e-commerce hubs show Kyiv has rumbled this vulnerability. Small companies are facing ruin, and if they go down, so too could Russian banks.

It could be that Mr Putin is betting the farm on a final escalatory surge, a massive, clinching mobilisation that will break Ukraine's morale. But his banker critics know Russia simply cannot afford to service its ruinous war ad infinitum. Meanwhile, ordinary Russians can see the country is running short of men for the front line. The dream that the war can still conclude to the greater glory of Russia now seems to all but the most blinkered of Mr Putin's followers to be entirely delusional.

Food of Love

A similar taste in music appears to be a reliable indicator of a couple's compatibility

Scientists in Austria have just discovered what Shakespeare knew when he wrote *Twelfth Night*. Music, it appears, really is the food of love.

Apparently, when hunting for a partner, it is best to look at the target's taste in music. Forget personality traits or values or any of that subtle psychological stuff: a shared love of Kajagoogoo supplies a better clue to the likelihood or otherwise of future conjugal bliss. Do you like piña coladas and getting caught in the rain? Well, it doesn't really matter if you do, so long as you both like Rupert Holmes and his 1979 ditty about personal ads, rum-based cocktails and sudden downpours.

A team led by Julia Vigl of the University of Innsbruck recruited 309 couples to test the musical hypothesis. In addition to answering questions designed to assess personality, the test subjects were asked to list their taste in music, including genres and artists. While the personality section asked how outgoing, agreeable, organised, emotionally stable and experimental people were, the values section interrogated openness, concern for others and the need for status. Crucial factors in compatibility, one would imagine. But, as Dr Vigl discovered when examining the responses of real couples, as opposed to artificially paired subjects, not nearly so important as a shared passion for Mozart, Madonna or the Manic Street Preachers.

The Innsbruck team suspect musical preferences reveal traits that personality tests miss. A fondness for a certain genre or artist might signal "an entire pattern of attributes that make for unique compatibility in close relationships", they suggest.

Perhaps. There are, of course, plenty of couples who despair of each other's musical preferences while remaining invincibly intertwined. After all, greater love hath no man than he who endures three hours of Heart FM on the northbound M1 for the sake of his other half.

World

Russia may slide into a revolution, ex-minister warns

Russia
Marc Bennetts

The chief economist at a Kremlin-owned state development corporation has been fired after warning that Russia was heading for a "social crisis" over the war in Ukraine and drawing parallels with the 1917 revolution that toppled the last tsar.

Andrei Klepach, who had been in his post at VEB since 2014, described the problems facing the Russian economy as "unprecedented" since the Second World War and predicted that Moscow would not be able to keep pace with western countries in an economic "war of attrition".

A former Russian deputy minister of economic development, Klepach, 67, made the comments at a discussion club at the Moscow stock exchange in May. However, they did not attract attention until they were reported on Friday by the Moscow Times, an exiled independent website that has been outlawed by the Kremlin. They caused a public storm and he was dismissed less than 48 hours later.

"In my view, the economy will hold up, but a social crisis could arise — and at a time when no one particularly expects it. Yet, let me remind you, no one expected the [1917] February Revolution either," he said, referring to the

Andrei Klepach, 67, worked at VEB, a state development corporation

overthrow of Nicholas II, Russia's last tsar. He also likened the situation to the final years of the Soviet Union before its collapse in 1991.

"We are falling behind. We are losing both the technological and economic competition in the world. And, as I have already said, we are losing it not only to China and the United States. In some respects, we are losing it to Ukraine," Klepach said. He also drew attention to a decline in healthcare and rising inequality, as well as to Russia's demographic crisis.

"We will not win this competition in a war of attrition. We have this illusion that everything [in Ukraine] will collapse. It has not collapsed and it will not. Our costs are growing.

"I believe Russia will not fall apart but I am almost certain that we will end up with a social crisis."

VEB is a Kremlin investment vehicle fully owned by the Russian state. Russia used it to fund infrastructure development for its hosting of the 2018 World Cup, as well as to extend its influence in Ukraine before the war.

Klepach's dismissal was ordered by Igor Shuvalov, VEB's chairman, after a "call from above", a source told The Bell, an independent Russian website that the Kremlin says is a "foreign agent".

President Putin has insisted that Russia's economy is coping with sanctions and other economic problems caused by the full invasion of Ukraine.

Although Russian analysts have sounded frequent warnings about the state of the economy, Klepach was removed from his post for linking its problems directly to the invasion of Ukraine, according to Alexandra Prokopenko, a former adviser to the Russian central bank.

"He said nothing that serious Russian economists haven't been saying for the past year," she told The Times. "The internal consensus on the economic trajectory is actually quite wide. The dissent isn't the problem.

"What is a problem — and this is what the Kremlin is genuinely nervous about ahead of September's Duma elections — is the framing of criticism in relation to the war.

"Russian economists can discuss monetary policy, deficit mechanics or investment collapse without triggering much reaction. The moment analysis connects economic deterioration to the war, the political sensitivity spikes."

Prokopenko is the author of a forthcoming book, *From Sovereigns to Servants*, about the impact of the war on Russia's elite.

Although vote-rigging in favour of Putin and his ruling United Russia party is widespread, the Kremlin sees the elections as an indicator of the public mood, analysts say. Putin's approval ratings have slumped to their lowest level since the start of the war in February 2022.

Last month the Russian economy ministry cut its GDP growth forecast to between zero and 1 per cent for this year, which would be the country's slowest level of economic growth since Putin sent tanks into Ukraine.

The regular shutdown of mobile internet services, seemingly to frustrate frequent Ukrainian drone strikes, has prompted Russians to withdraw large amounts of cash, making it harder for the Kremlin to collect tax. There has also been a surge in mortgage defaults.

Some analysts predict that economic turmoil could prompt Putin to raise the stakes in Ukraine, rather than seek a compromise solution to the war — the biggest conflict in Europe for more than 70 years.

"If I were Putin, God forbid, I would probably decide that it is in my interest to escalate now and try to finish the war on my terms [rather] than wait until the money ends sometime in the future," Alexander Kolyandr, director for Europe at the Eurasia Group consulting firm, told CNBC.

Nervousness within Russia about the economy was exacerbated in June when Elvira Nabiullina, the head of Russia's central bank, disappeared from public view for about a month. Nabiullina, who is widely credited with helping the Kremlin soften the impact of western sanctions, was reported to have told Putin that she would stand down if he caused the war to escalate.

Putin is playing a losing game, leading article, page 23

Ukraine war critic jailed for 11 years

Marc Bennetts

The deputy leader of a Russian anti-war political party has been sentenced to 11 years in prison for his criticism of the war in Ukraine.

Lev Shlosberg, 63, was convicted of spreading disinformation about Russia's invasion and of "discrediting" the Russian army by a court in Pskov, a city near the border with Estonia.

The disinformation charges stemmed from his reposting on social media of a headline from The Daily Mirror in 2022 that showed an injured Ukrainian woman and President Putin. It read: "Her blood ... his hands."

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the Kremlin denies targeting civilians in Ukraine. In 2022 Moscow made it a criminal offence to accuse Russian troops of doing so. The law was passed after Shlosberg's social media post, however.

Eight other members of his party, Yabloko, are behind bars because of their opposition to the war. In June, Maksim Kruglov, another deputy leader, was jailed for seven years over posts about civilian deaths in Ukraine.

On Friday Shlosberg said: "The very concept of a crime, understood as an act that poses a genuine danger to society, has been distorted in this country.

"Under these new laws, crimes now include the free expression of peaceful convictions, standing up for human dignity, protesting against violence, refusing to accept lies, and showing compassion, empathy and mercy towards others. Virtue is persecuted, while vice is encouraged and exalted."

Yabloko has been banned from fielding candidates in the parliamentary elections next month, having been unexpectedly allowed on the ballot days earlier.

Rotary club The Indonesian Air Force puts on a show during a ceremony to mark

Kanye West goes east with plan for St Petersburg gigs

Marc Bennetts

The rapper Kanye West will play two concerts in St Petersburg in October, a Russia event promoter said yesterday.

He will be the first well-known western musician to perform in Russia since the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022.

Organisers said that the rapper, who also goes by Ye, would play on October 10 and 11 at the Gazprom Arena, which has a capacity of 80,000. Tickets range from 9,000 roubles to 160,000 roubles (£78 to £1,390).

Ye has yet to comment on the shows in Russia. However, he visited Moscow in 2024 for a fashion designer's birthday, sparking speculation that he would play in the Russian capital.

He has previously expressed admiration for President Putin, describing himself in 2021 as a "Young Putin". He has also praised Adolf Hitler and his release of a song called *Heil Hitler* last year prompted outrage.

Ye later apologised for his antisemitic remarks through an advert in The Wall Street Journal, saying they were the result of untreated bipolar disorder.

He was banned from entering Britain to play a festival in April after the government said his presence "would not be conducive to the public good". Shows in Italy and Poland have also been scrapped. However, in May he played to 118,000 fans in Istanbul.

Pro-Kremlin figures said Ye should be forced to make a statement in support of the war in Ukraine before he was allowed to perform in Russia.

"If they want to earn money, [western musicians] need to understand the country is in a special military operation situation and requires moral support from cultural figures," Nikolay Novichkov, a pro-Kremlin MP, said.

French town revolts against party chalets
Page 27

Gold medals don't protect athletes from racist abuse
Page 28

MAST IRHAM/EPA

independence day. The archipelago, still reeling from an earthquake on Saturday, was ruled by the Netherlands until 1945

Trump threatens to bomb Oman over Strait talks

United States
George Grylls Washington

President Trump has threatened to "bomb the shit" out of Oman if it "gets in the way" of discussions over the sovereignty of the Strait of Hormuz.

The US leader told Fox News that he was in "no hurry" to secure a peace deal with Iran.

He also confirmed that Washington was speaking to members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) directly, and that Iran should surrender, before he then threatened Muscat.

Trey Yingst, a correspondent with Fox, said Trump had told him that "if Oman gets in the way, we'll bomb the shit out of them" when asked about talks between Iran and Oman over the sovereignty of the Strait of Hormuz in a call yesterday morning.

Oman, a traditionally neutral country, shares sovereignty of the strait with Iran and shipping lanes run through its territorial waters.

Iran said yesterday that it was working to finalise a joint statement with the sultanate on a plan to manage the transit of ships through the strait.

On Friday last week, Trump said he would designate the key waterway a territory of the US "pretty soon". Trump also called on the leaders in Tehran to "raise the white flag of surrender", even as he claimed talks were continuing, Fox said.

"President Trump confirmed that there's a back channel with the IRGC ... and that the United States and officials in Washington are speaking directly with IRGC officials," Yingst added.

The 60-day memorandum of understanding period between Washington and Tehran expired yesterday.

In a post on Truth Social yesterday, Trump also repeated that "the number one Goal is, and always will be, that Iran cannot have, in any way, shape, or form, a Nuclear Weapon".

Later, speaking in the Oval Office, Trump said of Oman: "I don't think they've behaved very well, but we handled them very easily."

Trump also denied that Washington's arsenal was being depleted by the war in Iran, telling Fox that the military hardware used so far was "peanuts".

The US president said he would not get involved with Israel's general election, which falls on October 27. He said: "I think it's most appropriate for me to stay out of Israeli elections, but I may endorse somebody."

Iran has presented an ambitious set of demands as the price for reopening the strait, insisting that it must be allowed to charge tolls on commercial vessels transiting through the waterway and that American troops must withdraw from the region.

In mid-June, the US and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding, only for the peace talks to collapse because of Tehran's unwillingness to surrender control of the strait. After the deal was signed, hardliners in Iran prepared for a resumption of hostilities.

The measures included giving the IRGC more control of the regular army, promoting veterans of the Iraq War to senior positions and increasing the production of drones and missiles, The Wall Street Journal reported.

Tehran has hardened its resolve and is determined to ensure the US does not attack it again.

The prospect of an Iranian offensive operation has alarmed smaller Gulf nations such as Kuwait, the paper said. An Iranian incursion into the country could be considered as retaliation for a potential American attack on Iranian territory such as Kharg Island.

Netanyahu refuses to compromise over Gaza peace proposals

Israel
Gabrielle Weiniger

Jared Kushner failed to overturn Israeli objections to a Gaza peace plan as he met Binyamin Netanyahu yesterday, a day after he held talks with Khalil al-Hayya, the Hamas chief, in Egypt.

Sir Tony Blair also met the Israeli prime minister in discussions aimed at rescuing the plan, which has stalled as Israel has carried out airstrikes and seized more territory in Gaza despite a ceasefire in October, while Hamas has refused to give up its weapons.

After meeting Netanyahu, Kushner, President Trump's son-in-law and envoy, last night told Fox News: "We could be seeing progress in as little as 30 days, hopefully on starting to take some of the weapons out, and hopefully filling in some of the tunnels as well in the next 60 to 90 days."

Netanyahu's office described the talks as "deep and constructive", but the only agreement announced was to "establish two working groups". One will consider the disarmament of Hamas and demilitarisation of Gaza, "which both Israel and the Board of Peace are determined should be prompt and completed before any reconstruction happens", the statement said, while the second "will focus on sanitation, clean water and other public health issues for the people of Gaza and which also impact the people of Israel".

Last month Trump announced that Hamas had agreed to lay down its arms in phases, under a 15-point roadmap put forward by his Board of Peace as Israel's military withdraws from Gaza. Hamas said it agreed to the roadmap but implementation depended on Israel first meeting its own commitments, including halting attacks and withdrawing.

Netanyahu rejected a revised plan last week, a move in part influenced by political campaigning before Israel's general election in October.

In Cairo on Sunday, Kushner and Blair sought to push Hamas to give up its weaponry, according to Axios. Hamas has committed to disarming but has not specified which weapons would be handed over or destroyed.

OHAD ZWIGENBERG/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Binyamin Netanyahu voted with his wife, Sara, in Likud party primaries yesterday

Hamas said after Sunday's meeting that it had asked the Board of Peace to "compel" Israel to accept the Gaza peace plan and "end all violations, halt killings and incursions, [and] approve the roadmap for the second phase" of the US-brokered ceasefire plan.

During the 90-minute meeting Hamas recommitted itself to disarming and handing over control in Gaza to a Palestinian technocratic government, in line with the plan's second phase, according to Axios.

Kushner told Hamas it needed to take tangible steps on disarmament if it wanted Israel to take steps of its own, a source told Axios.

"Kushner stressed to Hamas leaders that the bar is high because the Israeli side doesn't trust them to actually disarm," the source said.

Yesterday Netanyahu cast his vote along with other members of his Likud party to choose its candidates for October's general election in Israel.

Support for Netanyahu's party has fallen since the last election in 2022, with analysts saying a shift towards more right-wing candidates could threaten the Israeli leader's chances of winning.

HIMANSHU SHARMA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Marble slurry dumped at Kishangarh has created an unusual landscape, attracting tourists and film-makers alike

Marble city's white dust is a magnet for tourists

White mounds spread over a vast terrain, interrupted only by large turquoise pools of water (Amrit Dhillon writes). At first glance, the landscape looks like the top of a snowy mountain, but the sun is burning down and people wearing T-shirts and saris are posing in front of it.

The scene at Kishangarh dumping yard in Rajasthan, northern India, is the result of years of waste from cut and polished white marble dumped at the site.

The slurry has formed large, undulating mounds, giving it the name "Moon Land of Rajasthan". Water between the mounds forms the turquoise pools.

The scenery has proved magnetic for tourists, couples seeking a dramatic background for pre-wedding shoots and social media influencers. Horse rides across the surreal landscape are available.

Music videos and several Bollywood films, including the 2022 neo-western thriller *Thar*, have been shot here, saving producers money they would have spent on flying the cast and crew to Kashmir or Europe.

Kishangarh, known as the "marble city" of India, is packed with hundreds of cutting and polishing factories that use advanced technology to handle the best quality stone in India, along with luxury imported marble from Italy. Nearby are the quarries of Makrana, known for the white marble used to construct the Taj Mahal.

In 2002, the Rajasthan state government let the abandoned 82-acre site become a dedicated dumping yard. During peak periods, a truck arrives every ten minutes to offload. Since the slurry is made up of fine particles, it can irritate the eyes, throat and lungs. Some studies show it has contaminated the surrounding farmland, resulting in lower yields.

Reports have suggested that families living nearby suffer higher than normal levels of respiratory problems. Rajasthan, a desert state, experiences strong and frequent winds. Dust storms can be blinding and choking. When the wind blows, the slurry turns into thick clouds of dust.

India's environmental court, the Green Tribunal, has noted complaints of environmental hazards. In January, it said there was a lack of safety measures and ordered that the rules on controlling hazardous dust and heavy metal water contamination be followed.

Cockroach protest party tells Modi to fix crumbling schools

India
Amrit Dhillon Delhi

Leaking roofs, plaster falling off the walls, mould, no running water and no desks or chairs. After the success of India's "cockroach" movement in forcing out a government minister over the leaking of exam papers, protesters have found a new education cause to champion: the crumbling state of the country's public schools.

In the past few days students in northern India have gone on strike, calling for Narendra Modi's government to improve facilities and build more classrooms. In Madhya Pradesh others protested about an increase in bus fares that may make it difficult for them to attend school, while in Maharashtra there was a sit-in demanding an increased number of teachers.

Abhijeet Dipke, who founded the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), has come up with a new slogan, calling on Modi and his new education minister to "fix our schools". Dipke said schools had been neglected for 80 years and called on parents and children to post reels and photos of dilapidated classrooms. The aim is to embarrass local education officials into improving schools.

"We have made a new parliament, a new prime minister's house. Why have we not been able to build new schools in our villages?" he asked.

The move may end up proving as popular as the exam paper protests. Government statistics show that almost 100,000 schools have no functioning lavatory and 119,000 have no electricity, leaving pupils to roast in the heat without fans. "The latch on the toilet doors is broken and the toilet is filthy. I try not to use it but if I have to, I cover my nose with my scarf and ask a friend to stand guard outside," Nisha Kujur, 15, who lives in Raintoli village in Jharkhand, told The Times.

Indu Bansod, principal of a state school in Kolar, Madhya Pradesh, said her repeated complaints about a leaking roof had been ignored for years. "We make children sit together, crammed into the dry half of the classroom. Sometimes the leakage is so bad we have to send them home," she said.

Parents have lost faith in the system. The number of children enrolled in state schools has fallen from 71 per cent in 2005 to 49 per cent. Despite the cost, parents prefer private schools.

Although Dipke has challenged Modi to tell the public how many schools he has built and repaired in his 12 years in power, the reality is that successive governments neglected state schools. In recent years, India's spending on primary and secondary education has increased to about 3 to 4 per cent of GDP, similar to the UK. The difference is that corruption in India means much of the money never reaches the classroom.

Despite the successes in mass schooling after independence, many students enter the system but do not finish their education, with secondary drop-out rates as high as 20 per cent in West Bengal, according to government figures.

Standards are falling with one of the most comprehensive education surveys, the annual status of Indian education report, finding in 2023 that half of all class 5 students in rural India cannot read a class 2 textbook and only a quarter of class 5 children can do simple division. A class 5 pupil is typically 10 to 11 years old, while a class 2 pupil is seven.

Instead of acknowledging problems, officials in Rajasthan, Haryana, Karnataka and Delhi have banned filming inside school premises, citing "academic disruption". In some states, teachers have been questioned over filming.

Saurav Das, a spokesman for the CJP, said any crackdown would not work. "Through our protest movement over exam leaks, things have changed. Children are no longer afraid. India has found its voice," he said.

Man, 24, missing after pleasure craft collision

France One person is missing and nine people injured after a collision between two motor boats in the Bay of Cannes on the Côte d'Azur on Sunday. A 30ft-long Pardo launch was hit by a semi-rigid craft travelling at speed with 11 people on board off Mandelieu-la-Napoule southwest of Cannes at 11pm. Ten people aboard the twin-engined power boat were thrown into the water. Sébastien Leroy, the resort's mayor, said the missing man, 24, had been steering the faster of the two craft. He said four people were in critical condition and five in a serious condition. Leroy claimed alcohol was likely to have played a role in the collision.

One person dying of Ebola every 30 minutes

Democratic Republic of Congo The most recent Ebola outbreak has become the deadliest in the country's history, killing more than 2,300 people in three months and claiming a life every 30 minutes, the United Nations has said. No approved vaccine or treatment exists for the rare Bundibugyo virus strain, though several are in emergency development. The outbreak is affecting the impoverished northern and eastern parts of the country, where health infrastructure is scarce and armed groups have hampered relief efforts. The WHO said it hoped to control the spread of the disease within three months.

Amendment to allow women to take throne

Liechtenstein Women will be allowed to ascend the throne after the country's monarch passed an amendment to adopt absolute primogeniture, in which the first-born child becomes heir regardless of sex. On Saturday, the House of Liechtenstein, led by Prince Hans-Adam II, said it would ensure it was "governed by the person best-prepared for this task". The amendment will apply to future births. Hereditary Prince Alois, Hans-Adam's eldest son, will not be affected, but the claim will apply to descendants of his four children with Sophie, the hereditary princess.

Milk of human kindness makes flop film a hit

China A low-budget animated film about a cow has pulled off a cinematic box-office miracle after going viral for its confusing plot and terrible graphics. *Niu Lai* grossed only 7,705 yuan (£843) in its opening week but after gaining notoriety online its second-week earnings shot up. The film made more than 11.4 million yuan, keeping up with the weekly earnings of *The Odyssey* and *Spider-Man: Brand New Day* in mainland China. Online audiences embraced the poor animation as proof it had been made by hand, viewing it as an antidote to AI-generated "slop".

Vaulting ambition: alpine bunkers will keep the super-rich safe

Switzerland
Charles Bremner

James Bond's adversaries no longer need to create their own mountain lairs and protect them with platoons of guards. They can simply sign up with a Swiss firm that is hewing vaults for the super-rich into the alpine rock.

Brünig Mega Safe, founded by a team of mountain engineering entrepreneurs, is hollowing out up to 25 caverns more than 100 metres deep within the limestone of the Brünig massif near Lungern, southwest of Lucerne.

Starting at about 500,000 Swiss francs (£455,000), the ultra-secure vaults are mainly intended for safety deposit boxes, cars and other personal effects. The natural temperature is a constant 13C, ideal for storing artwork and wine.

However, given rising global instability including climate change and war, the caverns, which are kept under guard 24 hours a day, are also being proposed as a human refuge.

"Additional room modules complement your security cavern, where more than just protection is required — for example, for personal temporary retreat areas, discreet meeting areas or lounges with special atmosphere," the company website says.

Excavation work is due to begin in January and the developers say the protection will be "comparable to that of the Swiss National Bank".

Thomas Gasser, chairman of Brünig Mega Safe, said: "You'll first have to drive through a special checkpoint and get out of your vehicle. There will be several security checks, which obviously won't be disclosed to the public."

The market for ultra-secure storage is soaring. Gasser, 68, told RTS, the Swiss broadcaster: "For a long time, Dubai was considered safe. Today, that sense of security is being called into question. People simply want to safeguard part of their wealth."

Customers will have 24-hour access through a tunnel large enough for lorries. Clients are signing up for 99-year leases of the caverns, which the company says will start opening next year.

Owners will be further reassured by the project's third pillar: the Brünig Institute, a centre for security training, risk analysis and survival.

CHRISTOPH REICHWEIN DPA/AVALON; YVES HERMAN/REUTERS

Flames tear through High Fens nature reserve, bordering Germany. Firefighters have battled to contain the blaze

Belgian wildfire is biggest since 1911

Hundreds of firefighters are battling Belgium's biggest blaze in more than a century as Europe's record temperatures turn usually damp forests into tinderboxes (Adam Sage and Oliver Moody write).

The fire in High Fens nature reserve in eastern Belgium has destroyed more than 3,200 hectares of pine forests that were mostly planted in the 19th century. It has forced the evacuation of hundreds of villagers.

Although small by comparison with those in Spain and France this summer, the destruction is without precedent in Belgium since a 1911 blaze nicknamed "Dante's Inferno". King Philippe of Belgium visited a crisis centre in the region yesterday.

The High Fens are usually associated with wet weather, and known for mists hanging over the peat bogs. But as the western part of the continent experiences its hottest summer on record, according to the European climate monitoring service Copernicus, the wildfire has been burning since the end of last week.

More than 500 fire officers have been deployed, two Swedish water-bombing planes and seven firefighting helicopters from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway.

The fire had been threatening to cross the border into Germany, and forced the partial evacuation of the town of Monschau overnight. But officials said the flames were no longer advancing in that direction.

After morning rainfall, fire officers said the blaze appeared to have been contained, adding that parts of the forest were inaccessible and they were waiting for aerial images to get a complete picture. Prosecutors opened an investigation to discover the cause of the fire. Nine out of ten are started by humans.

In Germany, a wildfire has consumed 300 hectares of the Hürtgen Forest, the site of one of the most viciously fought battles of the final phase of the Second World War. Woods east of Aachen are littered with unexploded ordnance from the battle that dragged on for three months between American forces and the Wehrmacht in late 1944, with 83,000 deaths.

At the weekend, locals reported the sound of explosions as mines and other materiel detonated, forcing the evacuation of 1,800 people. Firefighters were unable to access parts of the forest without specially armoured vehicles. By yesterday, the authorities said the fire had largely been brought under control.

Town revolts against party chalets

France
Adam Sage Paris

The neighbourhood was calm, the views remarkable. Locals moved into the houses built in the small town of La Bresse in the Vosges mountains of eastern France a couple of decades ago in search of a peaceful existence in a famously beautiful spot.

But when two chalets — one with a capacity for 15 people, the other for eight — were put on the holiday rental market, life changed in the neighbourhood above the town centre.

Birthday parties, stag and hen dos, and family reunions have become common in the chalets, which are rented for several hundred euros a night on platforms such as Airbnb. People turn up for a party, drink, sing and play games throughout the night before leaving again to be replaced by new revellers.

"The houses are very close to each other so we hear everything," Annick Vaxelaire, a spokeswoman for a group of locals trying to restore calm to the area, said. "We spend whole nights awake listening to young people shouting. It started eight years ago and it is having an impact on our mental health."

Now La Bresse has become a symbol of a struggle by homeowners across France against what they say are the frequent disturbances caused by holiday rentals. This summer the group in La Bresse has put up a banner declaring the neighbourhood a "quiet zone" and saying: "Do not disturb." They have attracted the attention of local and national news outlets, but also of the authorities.

This month Pierre Mengin, the mayor of La Bresse, held a meeting attended by officials, holiday rental home owners and local residents.

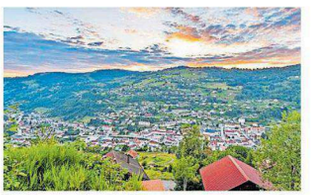
People from neighbouring towns and villages such as Gérardmer and Xonrupt-Longemer turned up to say they had similar problems.

The east is by no means the only region affected by conflicts linked to holiday rental platforms. In Normandy, a village cabinet maker told Le Parisien that he felt nervous every weekend at the prospect of having to put up with parties in the Airbnb next door.

In Dhuisy, east of Paris, the mayor cut the electricity to a house on the holiday rental market after complaints over regular parties last year.

In Sète on the Mediterranean, locals say they are considering moving away from their chic part of town because of endless parties at a 240sq m villa that is also on holiday rental platforms.

President Macron's government claims to be acting against the problem. A 2024 law gave residents' associations in blocks of flats the right to vote to prevent neighbours putting their properties on the holiday rental market. It also gave mayors powers to limit Airbnbs, or to force their return to the traditional rental market in the event of disturbances.



La Bresse in the Vosges mountains is said to be plagued by Airbnb rentals

Airbnb says it does not allow parties or other gatherings likely to cause a disturbance. But homeowners say the rules are often flouted and that other platforms are even less strict — some do not make even a token effort to prevent noisy parties likely to upset the neighbours.

In La Bresse, Vaxelaire's neighbourhood was originally intended to provide affordable homes for locals. Now she says they are at the end of their tether over regular parties held at holiday chalets that boast Jacuzzis and swimming pools.

Visitors come from elsewhere in France, but also from Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium. "We sometimes go down to tell them to make less noise but often they are slightly drunk and they want to come to blows," Vaxelaire added. "We are not against tourism. We want tourism but we are calling for a virtuous form of tourism that respects our tranquillity."

She fears that locals will move away. "We all want to live in our beautiful mountains. When we built the houses 25 years ago, it was not to have to leave again because of holiday rentals."

Jiang lost both his legs. Surgeons gave them back

China
Richard Spencer Beijing

Chinese surgeons have claimed the first successful double operation to reattach a pair of legs after a man who lost both in an industrial accident was able to walk again.

The 51-year-old patient, who has been identified only by his surname, Jiang, had both legs severed at the thigh at a factory in December 2024, according to state media.

He was taken to a specialist hospital in Suzhou, a city west of Shanghai, where a team of 20 "worked through the night" for nearly eight hours to reattach the limbs.

The operation was not reported at the time. Now, however, Suzhou Ruihua Orthopaedic Hospital has released details after its patient was able to walk again with the aid of a frame. He is said to have sensation in his legs down to the ankles.

"He is still recovering and is expected to gradually stop using crutches and eventually walk independently," Li Changsong, the head of the hospital's trauma orthopaedics team, told the Yangtse Evening Post. The patient can carry out most daily activities without assistance.

The only reported precedent is a Spanish man who lost both legs in an accident in 2011 and was given a double leg transplant from a deceased donor. The graft worked until the patient was forced by illness to stop taking anti-rejection drugs.

The description of Jiang's progress makes for difficult reading. He was in hospital for three months and needed several follow-up operations. He suffered complications including necrosis, and one femur had to be refixed after the initial join did not take.

When his metal supports were removed, he was able to move his legs without help. He underwent 20 months of rehabilitation at home.

The hospital said: "It is understood that in the field of reattachment of severed limbs, there have been numerous successful cases involving the reattachment of a single severed thigh.

"However, there had been no previously published reports worldwide of the simultaneous complete reattachment of both thighs following a crush injury, followed by the restoration of the patient's ability to walk."

ZEREN GU/SOLENT NEWS

Communal care Flamingo parents tend to a crèche of chicks at Celestún Nature Reserve in Mexico, a popular nesting ground

An incredible introduction to Indonesia, this journey immerses you in rich cultures and spectacular landscapes across this diverse archipelago. Travel from Jakarta's colonial Old Town across Java to Yogyakarta, Indonesia's cultural heart, home to Unesco-listed temples, royal palaces, and the mighty Borobudur. Experience traditional village life in Candirejo and witness sunrise over Mount Bromo on an unforgettable jeep adventure. Explore the colourful streets of Malang before flying to Flores Island, where crystal-clear waters and volcanic scenery await.

Cruise between stunning islands surrounded by turquoise seas and dramatic volcanic backdrops. Discover unique wildlife, vibrant marine life, and unspoilt natural beauty. Enjoy meaningful cultural encounters and moments of adventure at every turn. Conclude your journey island-hopping in Komodo National Park in search of the legendary Komodo dragons, before unwinding on the idyllic tropical beaches of Bali.

*Prices listed are based on two sharing a twin/double room. Single supplement on request. Flights on holidays booked more than 11 months in advance may be subject to supplements when airline fares are published. Operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Wendy Wu, ABTA W7994 ATOL 6639, a company wholly independent of News UK. ^The offer is subject to availability and Wendy Wu Tours reserve the right to change or withdraw the offer. ^Offer discount already applied, book by September 1, 2026.

Our trusted partner Wendy Wu Tours | ABTA Travel with confidence

Price includes

- International flights and current taxes
- Rail journeys from Jakarta to Semarang, and Yogyakarta to Mojokerto
- 14 nights in three plus / four-star accommodation
- 14 breakfasts, 12 lunches and ten dinners
- Touring with guides and entrance fees
- Free pre-tour extension with hotel, breakfast and private transfers available on any Wendy Wu tour - exclusively for The Times readers

CALL TODAY ON
0808 304 2408
thetimes.com/ww-indonesia
QUOTE TIMES-ON^

Gold medals don't protect athletes from racist abuse

Italy
Tom Kington Rome

For the millions of Italians glued to their TVs on Sunday for the finale of the European Athletics Championships, a defining moment was their countrywoman Larissa Iapichino winning the long jump.

Iapichino was one of the non-white athletes who helped Italy top the medal table with ten golds, edging Britain, the hosts, into second place.

Three days earlier Sara Curtis, 19, whose mother is Nigerian and father Italian, set a new world record for the 50 metres backstroke at the European Aquatics Championships in Paris.

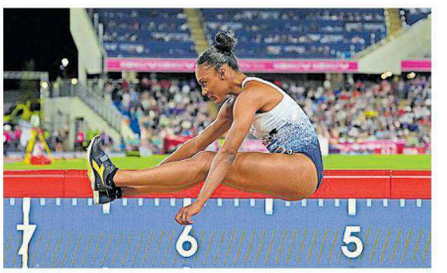
After decades of migration, it is no surprise to see athletes with different backgrounds competing for Italy, but between a fifth and a quarter of Italians still believe black people cannot be Italian, according to polling by the Euromedia Research Group.

Before entering politics Roberto Vannacci, the rising star of hard-right Italian politics, wrote about the volleyball star Paola Egonu, born in Italy to Nigerian parents, in a bestselling 2023 book. He said "her features don't reflect Italian-ness".

Vannacci has reached 7 per cent in recent polls, posing a threat to the re-election of the prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, next year.

"Things are changing in Italy but some politicians still have their head in the sand," said Robert Elliot, a British activist with Cittadino del Mondo, an anti-racism association.

The Italian line-up at the European Athletics Championships in Birmingham featured the former Olympic gold-winning sprinter Marcell Jacobs, son of a black American serviceman; and the runners Nadia Battocletti and Mohamed Soudassi, who both have Moroccan parents.



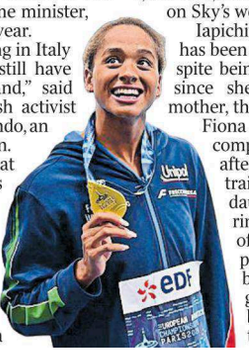
The long jumper Larissa Iapichino and the swimmer Sara Curtis, below, both stars of Italian sport, have challenged those who still view them as foreign

Vannacci's hesitancy to celebrate black Italian athletes contrasted with Meloni, who rang Curtis after her record swim in Paris to congratulate her. However, her call came against a wider backdrop of racist comments in Italian society.

Last year Curtis said: "Some write that my Italian record is actually a Nigerian record," adding: "Hearing people say I am not Italian because I am mulatto is repugnant."

After the Italian runner Zaynab Dosso, whose parents migrated from Ivory Coast, won a world championship bronze in 2024 she reported that 1,500 of 2,000 comments about her on Sky's website were racist.

Iapichino, the long jumper, has been targeted by abuse despite being a celebrity in Italy since she was a child. Her mother, the black British athlete Fiona May, switched to competing for Italy in 1994 after marrying her Italian trainer and raised her daughter in Italy, starring with her in a series of TV adverts. May's public profile helped black Italian athletes gain some acceptance, but when her daughter received online abuse in 2024 she claimed intolerance was growing. "Italy has gone back 20 years. Back then there wasn't all this racism, or maybe there simply wasn't social media," she said.



Tiziano Pesce, head of the sporting association UISP, said that if top stars were being insulted, things were worse for the children of migrants who under Italian law cannot apply for citizenship until they are 18.

"They go to the same schools and speak the same language as their mates, but cannot represent their country," he said.

Pesce believes athletic success could win over politicians such as Vannacci. "Politicians struggle to see a person of colour as Italian, but victories like Birmingham can show them that Italian-ness is not about biology and that our plural society is a reality," he said.

Aldo Cazzullo, the Italian writer, said he believed that Italians by and large disagreed with Vannacci. "People understand he is wrong when he says coloured skin does not represent Italian-ness," he said.

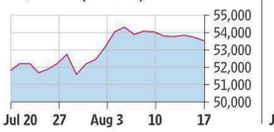
Italian football needs to follow where athletics is leading, he added, saying: "Mario Balotelli could have been Italy's first great black football champion but too often was greeted by fans chanting that black Italians do not exist. I hope the next Mario Balotelli gets a warmer welcome."

Business

WORLD MARKETS (Change on the day)

FTSE 100
10,720.30 (-29.81)

Dow Jones
53,459.78 (-272.63)



COMMODITIES

Gold
$4,397.74 (+7.98)

Brent crude (6pm)
$89.17 (+1.12)

CURRENCIES

£/$
$1.3561 (+0.0011)

£/€
€1.1701 (+0.0003)

Collapsed litigation funder raised £300m from investors

James Hurley Assistant Business Editor

A litigation funding business that collapsed in July raised more than £300 million from individual investors and secured funds via promoters linked to alleged investment scams.

Woodville Consultants continued to raise funds against legal cases including car finance claims despite the Financial Conduct Authority requesting that it stop four years ago. It also used promoters associated with what the regulator has called "very high" commission rates, an investigation by The Times has established.

Woodville was promoted by sales networks that promoted other failed investment schemes, including 79th Group. This provider of property-based "loan note" investments is the subject of a City of London police investigation into "suspected widespread fraud". Its operators have denied wrongdoing.

Woodville Consultants was placed into administration in July and insolvency practitioners from Kroll were appointed. The group, based in Pontypridd, Wales, told investors in May that repayments had been delayed because complications in car finance litigation had "delayed repayments to our law firms and ultimately to us" and in June it said "procedural issues" had delayed a funding line of up to $500 million.

Insolvency practitioners expressed concerns that it had a "fundamentally uneconomic business model". Administrators are now understood to be examining issues such as how much of investors' money went to law firms, the viability of underlying legal claims, payments to third parties and its banking arrangements amid concerns about the use of investors' money.

Woodville raised funds via "loan notes", high-risk debt instruments that are at the centre of FCA concerns about mis-selling, undisclosed commissions and misuse of investor funds.

Such schemes have raised billions of pounds from investors and several have collapsed, leaving thousands of investors facing "devastating" losses.

A regulated company run by Ann Marie Bell and Peter Legge, the same directors as Woodville, Integrity Protect No 1, was placed under restrictions by the FCA in 2022 over concerns about loan notes, including evidence it was "borrowing funds via loan notes by using the bank account of Woodville", which is unregulated.

At the time, Integrity Protect was

Continued on page 31

Boss calls for action to end IPO drought

Castore founder says Britain must embrace risk

Graham Ruddick Deputy Business Editor

The founder of one of the UK's fastest-growing businesses has said there needs to be a "psychological and structural change" if the country is going to attract more companies to float.

Tom Beahon, co-founder and chief executive of sportswear brand Castore, said there was more understanding in the US and other countries that younger businesses would be more "volatile".

Castore was valued at $1.3 billion (£960 million) in its latest fundraising in 2023. The sportswear brand was launched by Beahon and his brother Phil in 2016 and is based in Manchester.

Beahon has said an initial public offering is "not on the radar at the moment" for Castore and it still has a "long runway" to raise money privately. The pool of private and venture capital funds available to a promising UK business had got "significantly larger", giving growing start-ups more options.

The comments highlight the challenges facing the London Stock Exchange (LSE) after a dearth of IPOs in 2026.

"If you look at the experience of some founder-led businesses that have listed in London, they have not been great," Beahon told The Times. "There are nuanced reasons as to why. But I think most fair-minded people would say that other stock markets, particularly the US, are more accepting that less mature businesses, by their very definition, will be more volatile.

"A thriving economy needs those mature businesses that are steady, pay dividends and support pensions, as well as entrepreneurial, creative, innovative young businesses who are taking more risk trying to expand into new markets.

"The UK market has performed pretty well in the last couple of years. But we shouldn't kid ourselves that is for any reason other than oil prices are up and investors are more focused on an anti-AI trade and Britain is seen as a more defensible place to put money. To my mind, there is a psychological and structural change required for the UK market to be more accepting that with greater reward comes greater risk."

There was a great understanding in the US that "owning equities is proven over the very long-term to outperform any other asset class". He added: "Look at the culture of the US. People cheer on the stock market. More people in the US across the income ladder own equities. They want Coca-Cola to announce great results, Starbucks to announce great results. That can only be helpful to a vibrant economy.

"There is no good reason why the UK can't achieve that. But I do think it's on the government to work with the LSE to find those policies — whether they're fiscal incentives or an educational change — to help ignite a catalyst, because London needs it."

Beahon said there were now "really creative ways" that a young business could raise capital. "That doesn't mean that listing has no place in the ecosystem. But the public market needs to know that it is being measured now against more alternatives," he said. "The LSE — who I have great respect for, and they're trying to do this — need to make listing as attractive as possible."

'Castore can hit £1bn', pages 30-31

KARWAI TANG/GETTY IMAGES

More than skin deep Charlotte Tilbury, right, at an event with George and Amal Clooney at the Royal Albert Hall. Her beauty brand has reported profits that grew almost 15 per cent in the year to the end of December. Report, page 35

Chair 'dialling it in' from down under, says activist

Guy Taylor Retail Correspondent

The boardroom battle at The Works has taken an unexpected twist amid accusations that Steve Bellamy, the books-to-crafts chain's chairman, is dialling into board meetings from New Zealand.

Kelso, the activist investor which is pushing for its own nominee on the board, called for the retailer to clarify how much time Bellamy spends in the UK, and how many of the seven board meetings over the past year he has attended in person.

The investor has dug out Companies House filings from last October, when Bellamy was removed from a separate board role at the recruitment firm Empresaria, which lists his residency as New Zealand. In other directorships, however, his "country of residence" is displayed as England and his nationality as "New Zealander".

Kelso, which holds a 10 per cent stake in The Works, said "transparency" on how much time Bellamy was spending in the UK would "provide useful reassurance to shareholders regarding the level of board engagement with the business".

A spokesman for The Works said the chairman — who has been in post for just over two years — had attended "all in-person board meetings" and "all online meetings" and that this was a "matter of record" in annual reports. "Kelso was fully aware of the time Steve spends outside the UK when they were involved in and strongly supported his appointment. Nothing has changed in Steve's personal or working circumstances since his appointment in 2024."

It marks the latest escalation in a boardroom dispute centred on Kelso's efforts to install Graeme Coulthard, a retired former partner at the private equity firm Charterhouse Capital Partners, to the board. A shareholder vote on the proposals is due to take place at the company's annual meeting on September 7.

Need to know

1 The founder of one of the UK's fastest-growing businesses has said there needs to be a "psychological and structural change" if the country is going to attract more companies to float. Tom Beahon, chief executive of the sportswear brand Castore, said there was more understanding in the US and other countries that younger businesses would be more "volatile". Page 29

2 A litigation funding business that collapsed in July raised more than £300 million from individual investors and secured funds via promoters linked to alleged investment scams. Woodville Consultants continued to raise funds against legal cases including car finance claims despite the Financial Conduct Authority requesting that it stop four years ago. Page 29

3 The boardroom battle at The Works has taken an unexpected twist amid accusations that Steve Bellamy, the books-to-crafts chain's chairman, is dialling into board meetings from New Zealand. Page 29

4 The government is to pay EY and KPMG almost half a billion pounds to train civil servants — less than two years after Labour pledged to slash spending on external consultants.

5 Britain's housebuilders have asked the government to once again pause the introduction of an industry levy which they claim will make even more sites financially unviable. The building safety levy will come into force in October, a year later than planned, and will make residential developers pay a fee when they build a new home. Page 32

6 Saudi Arabia's trillion-dollar wealth fund signalled that it is slowing down and scaling back plans to build a futuristic region in Neom including a "linear city" as it focuses on profits. Page 34

7 AstraZeneca has announced positive results in two late-stage lung cancer trials but discontinued a third study for a potential blockbuster amid heightened investor scrutiny of its drug pipeline. Page 35

"Why gardening leave is choking the British economy

Katie Prescott, page 33

For expert business analysis subscribe to the business newsletter thetimes.com/newsletters

Sportswear upstart has

Tom Beahon has big ambitions for Castore after taking on the likes of Nike and Adidas, he tells **Graham Ruddick**

Tom Beahon is exactly the sort of business leader that Andy Burnham's Britain wants more of.

He is a northerner who grew up on the Wirral in Merseyside and had the outlandish idea with his brother, Phil, that they could launch a British challenger to Adidas and Nike. Their parents remortgaged the family home to fund the idea and ten years ago this month they launched it.

From these humble origins, that idea — Castore — is now a global business. Its head office is in Manchester, just down the road from Burnham's No 10 North.

Much has changed for Castore and the Beahon brothers over the past decade, but they still travel to work together in the morning, albeit instead of getting the bus one of them now drives. "There's times, particularly in the difficult moments, where it feels like that person is the only one who knows what you're really going through," Tom Beahon says of his brother.

Castore generated more than £335 million in annual revenue last year and was valued in its latest fundraising in 2023 at $1.3 billion (£960 million), making it a unicorn, a start-up valued at $1 billion or more.

At the Rugby World Cup next year both England and the hosts Australia will wear Castore kits. Beahon has already seen Andy Murray wear Castore at Wimbledon as well as Matt Fitzpatrick win the US Open golf tournament, Max Verstappen win the Formula One world title and England win the T20 cricket World Cup in 2022 while wearing the brand.

"Those moments will be watched for years, decades and generations to come. And Castore will be associated with them. It's pretty special," Beahon tells The Times.

If this sounds like a UK success story, it is. But it also hides the challenges and setbacks Castore has faced along the way.

You may have heard Castore's origin story before. Beahon wanted to be a professional footballer but was let go in his early twenties by Tranmere Rovers, his local team. Driven by that setback, Beahon decided to start a sportswear business with his brother instead. They got flights to Portugal to look for factories, then stood outside upmarket gyms in London to give their new clothing to personal trainers, who they hoped would encourage their clients to buy them.

They sent clothes to the coaching team around Murray until the tennis player asked them what brand they were wearing and sought out the Beahon brothers. Castore couldn't afford to pay Murray in any sponsorship deal so offered him an equity stake in the business instead. Murray agreed and the partnership has paid-off for both parties.

However, the second part of the Castore story has been less told. This is the challenge of turning one of the UK's most promising start-ups into a large company. It involves Castore being criticised for the quality of its clothing after Aston Villa and Newcastle United cancelled kit deals. And it involves an aggressive fightback from Adidas, Nike and Puma, who have swooped to take sponsorship deals that Castore had secured, such as the McLaren Formula One team.

"The downside of being in sport is the antithesis of the upside, which is that millions of people watch it. So when you make mistakes — which are inevitable, and we have made mistakes — millions of people will see them," Beahon says. "But just like the good moments are great and fleeting, the bad moments come and go. And you learn a hell of a lot more from those moments than the good ones."

Beahon, who is the chief executive of Castore, turns to a quote from Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, to sum up his approach. The quote is about the inherent difference between business and sport: "He said that business isn't like baseball, where the maximum you can score from a home run is four. There's no cap on the upside. So, as long as you're comfortable that you're managing your downside, logically and analytically you should swing for the fences every time.

"That ambition is deeply ingrained in the Castore DNA. Of course it leads to challenges and we've learnt that. But it's rational to swing for the fences as long as your downside is protected. I don't think many British companies have that mindset."

But while Beahon is still full of ambition, building Castore has also taught him the value of patience. "In the early days, and I think this philosophy served us well, we had to make things happen. We were incredibly ambitious. So when the opportunity to partner with Andy Murray came up, we jumped at it. We couldn't afford to do that partnership, but we made it happen.

"Now, having gone through years five to ten [of building Castore], I've learnt that patience — the ability to think in terms of decades rather than quarters — is a huge competitive advantage.

"It's not binary. This is not sitting in an ivory tower, drinking nice coffee and thinking about where Castore will be in ten, 15, 20 years' time. You still need to work really hard and have that intensity, drive and passion to make the business 1 per cent better every day. But I've learnt that strategic patience and thinking long-term is how you create real value. We launched footwear and womenswear within the space of six months, which was not clever. These are really challenging categories to launch. You have to be really clear about what your right to win is in each of those categories. It's really difficult to do that in six months."

A next target for Castore is reaching £1 billion of annual revenues — roughly

Firms get £450m to train civil servants

Tom Howard
Professional Services Correspondent

The government is to pay EY and KPMG almost half a billion pounds to train civil servants — less than two years after Labour pledged to slash spending on external consultants.

The two "Big Four" accountancy firms will provide ad hoc "learning and training services" to the civil service between September 2026 and March 2028 while Labour gets the "school of government" up and running again.

For their 18 months of work, EY and KPMG will receive up to £456 million, the largest single contract the Cabinet Office has awarded to Big Four firms since the records of Tussell, a government contracts analyst, began in 2012.

KPMG will get the lion's share of the fee, £319 million, with EY receiving the remaining £137 million. Their job will be co-ordinate training programmes, including for artificial intelligence skills, when needed while departments wait for the school of government to reopen.

Both firms declined to comment.

The previous largest deal, for a maximum value of £322 million, was awarded by the Foreign Office in 2012 to PwC to run the Girls' Education Challenge. Larger deals have been struck with companies outside of the Big Four.

The award comes despite the promise made in 2024, when Sir Keir Starmer was prime minister, to halve spending on consultants after it jumped to record levels during the pandemic. A Cabinet Office spokesman said the government was making "real progress in cutting external spending" and aiming to halve consultancy spending.

He added: "As committed in January, we are moving away from outsourced contracts. Our new in-house model, the National School of Government, will reduce reliance on external spending and provide better value for the taxpayer." David Cameron's coalition axed the school of government in 2012.

The school is relaunching this year but it will take three years for it to build back up to full capacity.

Tussell data shows Big Four firms have been awarded £1.25 billion of government contracts so far in 2026, surpassing the £1.06 billion in 2025. At the peak in 2020, Big Four firms won contracts worth just over £1.7 billion.

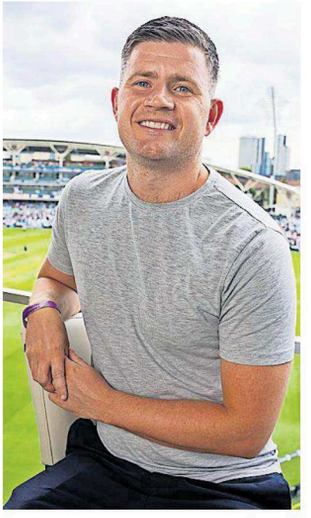
Yield highest since 2007

The yield on the benchmark 30-year US Treasury bond rose to 5.31 per cent, its highest level since June 2007, as America's national debt approaches $40 trillion and investors demand higher compensation for holding long-term government debt.

The yield rose about three basis points during the day, heading towards the 5.44 per cent reached in 2007 at the onset of the financial crisis. The yield on the US 10-year Treasury rose to 4.73 per cent yesterday compared with 4.69 per cent on Friday and from 3.97 per cent before the war with Iran. The average long-term US mortgage rate has already risen to near its highest level in a year due to the rise in the 10-year Treasury yield.

eyes on £1bn goal

JACK THOMAS/GETTY IMAGES; JOS BUTTLER/ALAMY; JACK TAYLOR FOR THE TIMES



Castore has made the official kit for Everton since 2024 and counts the cricketer Jos Buttler as a brand partner. Buttler, above, wears a limited edition top as part of a partnership between the brand and the Rolling Stones. Right, Tom Beahon at the Oval, London

three times what it generates now. To do this, Beahon, who is still just 35 years old, is targeting international expansion and potentially more acquisitions. Last year Castore bought the men's fashion brand Belstaff from Ineos, Sir Jim Ratcliffe's company.

A billion of revenue is an ambitious target for Castore given the response of Adidas, Nike and Puma to the company's arrival. These established brands have poached sports teams that had deals with Castore with rival offers priced at "uneconomic" levels for the British company, according to Beahon. However, this has opened up other opportunities.

"I knew that they weren't going to roll out the red carpet and pat us on the back for our entrepreneurial endeavours," he says. "They were going to kick back. In many ways, I take it as a compliment. We are a business started by two guys in Merseyside using money from their parents' remortgaged house. To make global brands sit up and respond to us is itself a huge achievement.

"I like that competitive dynamic because as they react to us, by definition, they're focused on us — they're not focused on what's coming next. So whilst those big brands might be able to give us the odd black eye, longer term I am completely confident that we can zig while they zag.

"It's all about adaptability. We're incredibly fortunate that the sports industry is genuinely global and vast. So if Formula One becomes incredibly competitive, there are other parts of the ecosystem that become less competitive. It's my job to work out where those opportunities are and try to be ahead of the competition."

Once upon a time a business like Castore would have been joining the queue to float in London. But, like other fast-growing UK businesses, that is not on the agenda. Castore has already raised tens of millions of pounds privately and thinks it can raise more if necessary.

"We think there's a long runway still ahead of us to grow privately," Beahon says. "We know from conversations that there is funding available for us privately should we need it."

This expansion of the private and venture capital markets in the UK is one of the reasons that businesses like Castore are not floating. Another reason is that there is concern about what life on the public markets would be like.

"If you look at the experience of some founder-led businesses that have listed in London they have not been great," Beahon says. "There are nuanced reasons as to why. But I think most fair-minded people would say that other stock markets, particularly the US, are more accepting that less mature businesses, by their very definition, will be more volatile."

As Beahon plots the future of Castore, he has the benefit of learning what it takes to succeed from the elite athletes that the company works with. But he is also learning from Castore's investors, which now include Ratcliffe following the Belstaff deal. A key lesson stands out.

"You have to love it," Beahon says. "It's not glamorous. You have to love it every day. Having had the opportunity to spend some time with Sir Jim in the last 12 months, he fizzes with ideas, with excitement and the desire to learn. What an inspiration that is.

"Successful people, in my experience, do not spend too much time worrying about what other people think of them or what the scoreboard says. They just want to be the best they can be."

Woodville 'was fundamentally flawed'

Continued from page 29

told to tell Woodville to "stop all financial promotion of investments or loans". In May, when Woodville was showing signs of distress, Kairos, a new loan note, was launched, and described as a "$500 million programme". Kairos is controlled by Bell and Legge.

Bell, 53, was approached for comment. Legge, 51, could not be reached.

Paul Muscutt, partner at Crowell & Moring, a law firm working with Kroll on the case, said he believed "the Woodville investment scheme was fundamentally flawed from the outset" .

He said there was no clear basis for it to "promise quarterly returns at high interest levels when the source of income to meet those returns" was repayments from law firms pursuing claims such as car finance, which are inherently uncertain in "quantum and timing".

Lawsons, a network of sales consultants that promotes loan notes, told consultants they could make commission of 10 per cent to 15 per cent on investors' money by promoting Woodville. Some investors have claimed such commission was not disclosed.

This was separate to any commission taken by Lawsons and SW1, a distributor of the scheme. Other schemes promoted via Lawsons include 79th Group, and Alderley Group, a social housing investment scheme that went bust in June. SW1 and Lawsons were approached for comment. There is no suggestion Lawsons or SW1 had suspicions about schemes they promoted.

Muscutt said: "There are concerns the viability of Woodville investments was compromised by the deductions from investors' capital of sums used to pay for high commissions."

According to public records, Woodville's receiving bank was HSBC. It has been claimed Woodville told investors prior to collapse it had to move banks as HSBC had heightened scrutiny of payments. HSBC declined to comment.

Robert Goodhew, managing director at Kroll, said: "We are in the early stages of our work and are engaging closely with the relevant parties to establish the extent of the assets and their likely value. Based on the information currently available to us, we believe that more than £300 million has been raised from investors. This figure remains subject to ongoing review."

Trouble in pipeline for Astra boss

BUSINESS COMMENTARY *Ben Martin*

No heart attack for AstraZeneca shareholders this time but they'll still be feeling a little queasy after another blow endured by the FTSE 100 drugmaker in a late-stage clinical trial.

True, the scale of this latest setback, concerning an experimental antibody, volrustomig, is not in the same league as that suffered by Astra's Wainua medication last month, when investors took fright and knocked about £14 billion off the company's valuation in a single day after Wainua failed a phase three heart disease trial.

City analysts had been expecting peak-year sales of about $3.3 billion for that use of Wainua and its failure came as a big surprise to the stock market. By contrast, the abandoned phase three trial disclosed by Astra yesterday (report, page 35), which had been assessing the use of volrustomig with chemotherapy to treat patients with metastatic non-small cell lung cancer, had always been considered "high risk", according to Bank of America analysts, and estimated peak-year sales for this use of the drug were $1.6 billion, making it a smaller hit than the Wainua failure.

Furthermore, the volrustomig blow was cushioned by the announcement of positive results from two other late-stage lung cancer trials that Astra had been conducting. While expected peak-year sales for those treatments are lower than what was estimated with volrustomig, that good news helped to send Astra shares up by 0.9 per cent to £115.60.

Still, the stock remains well below the £142.40 level at which it was trading before the whack from Wainua and the volrustomig disappointment will exacerbate investor concerns that Astra may be losing its touch when it comes to developing "blockbuster" drugs (which, in pharmaceuticals parlance, are treatments that generate more than $1 billion in annual sales).

Led by Sir Pascal Soriot since 2012, Astra has established a formidable track record in drug development, achieving a success rate of about 85 per cent to 90 per cent in phase three trials in recent years, compared with an industry average of 60 per cent to 65 per cent. Throw in the fact the company has an ambitious target of generating more than $80 billion of annual sales by 2030 — up from $58.7 billion last year — and also faces a sales cliff edge in the 2030s when patents for some of its top-selling cancer drugs expire, and maintaining its ability to deliver blockbusters has therefore never been more important.

That's why its shareholders were so rattled by a report earlier this month that Astra had been in talks about a $400 billion merger with an American rival, Bristol Myers Squibb. While neither company commented on that Financial Times report, Astra shares fell sharply amid investor concerns that Soriot may be considering a blockbuster deal because he was losing faith in its drug pipeline.

And now there's the volrustomig failure, which brings "pipeline risk back into focus" at Astra, Bank of America's analysts told clients. Granted, hopes had not been particularly high for the trial and Astra's shares were lifted by its other phase three successes. But the pressure on Soriot nevertheless has ramped up a little further.

Bankable truths

Another day, another bank boss lobbying the government not to raise taxes on lenders at the next budget. At least, that's how it feels, with Ana Botin, the executive chair of Santander, sounding the alarm in June about the already-high tax burden on banks in the UK and Jane Fraser, the head of Citigroup, saying this month she is "worried" about levies here and warning that "money votes with its feet".

Now it's the turn of Jamie Dimon, the boss of JPMorgan Chase, who warned John Healey in a call last week about the repercussions of higher taxes. It's an argument Dimon has made in public, too, telling a podcast last month that heavier levies have "adverse consequences".

It's true that increasing taxes on banks is hardly going to be unpopular with the wider public, and robust profits in the industry thanks to higher-for-longer interest rates doubtless make lenders a tempting target for Healey. Banks are also indebted to UK taxpayers who propped up the financial system during the 2007-09 financial crisis to the tune of £137 billion.

Even so, the UK's tax regime for banks already looks uncompetitive internationally, with lenders paying an overall tax rate of 46.4 per cent last year, according to UK Finance, the lobby group. That compared with 38.9 per cent in Frankfurt and 27.9 per cent in New York. Healey's predecessor, Rachel Reeves, made many mistakes as chancellor but she didn't raise bank taxes and was right when she called financial services "the crown jewel in the UK economy". It may rankle when rich bankers like billionaire Dimon lobby against higher industry levies but it doesn't make them wrong.

Long way to work

A "rehoming" scheme for "pre-loved" items and a "colleague energy-saving course" are all well and good but one wonders whether the discount retailer The Works is missing something obvious in its efforts to limit its effect on the environment. This is, after all, a company that proudly proclaims in its annual report that "we care about our impact on the planet". So how about tackling the carbon footprint of its jet-setting chairman, Steve Bellamy, who, it has emerged, splits his time between New Zealand and the UK, which, along with a handful in Ireland, is where the retailer's 500-odd stores are located?

benjamin.martin@thetimes.co.uk

Business

Halt safety levy, housebuilders plead

Tom Howard Property Correspondent

Britain's housebuilders have asked the government to once again pause the introduction of an industry levy which they claim will make even more sites financially unviable.

The building safety levy will come into force in October, a year later than originally planned, and will make residential developers pay a fee when they build a new flat or house.

The industry estimates that the levy will add about £2,320, on average, to the cost of building a home. The money will go into the building safety fund, used to replace dangerous cladding and other fire safety defects in blocks of flats built by foreign or defunct developers.

The Home Builders Federation (HBF) has urged the government to delay the introduction of the levy once again or risk hampering development even further with the "ongoing layering of costs" over the past few years.

The boss of one major developer has said that the government's actions are at odds with its promise to build 1.5 million new homes by the end of 2029. "They give with one hand and take away with the other," they said.

The trade body estimates the cost of building the typical new home has increased by £76,000 over the past five years, driven mostly by dearer material and labour costs, but also extra taxes.

There has been a much smaller increase in house prices over that time, which has dented profit margins. Zoopla, the property platform, has previously published a report suggesting that building new homes is not financially viable across half of England.

While the big developers have borne the brunt of funding the remediation of tower blocks after the 2017 Grenfell fire, which killed 72 people, the safety levy will apply to builders of all sizes.

A HBF survey of its small and medium-sized members found that 91 per cent expect the levy will make their developments economically unviable. A third said they had delayed, redesigned or cancelled projects in anticipation.

"The government has set ambitious housing targets, but the ongoing layering on of costs on to development by successive governments has made a growing proportion of potential housebuilding sites unviable," Neil Jefferson, chief executive of the HBF, said.

The federation argues that the government is adding another cost at a time when housebuilding is already difficult and that smaller developers, who have never built anything higher than a two-storey house, are having to pay to fix others' sub-standard building work.

In addition, the HBF has suggested that no one seems sure how much is actually needed to remediate every poorly designed block in the country.

The housing ministry had estimated about 7,500 buildings would need work, but that figure has been revised down to 5,800 at most. There is about £2.6 billion in the building safety fund that the federation claims is "unallocated".

The industry said it had committed over £6 billion to the cladding crisis. The levy would take that near £10 billion, while other industries responsible have not "contributed a penny".

"The homebuilding industry is already making a substantial contribution towards the cost of remediating historic building safety issues, yet this levy places a further burden on developers who played no part in creating those problems," Jefferson said. "We are urging the government to pause the introduction of the levy."

A spokesman for the housing ministry said the levy "will provide essential funding to deliver safe homes".

Prices soar as Ferrari accelerates into EV era

The record-breaking $40 million sale at auction of its first all-electric car might have grabbed the headlines but prices achieved for the rest of Ferrari's classic line-up were pretty eye-popping too (Simon Freeman writes).

Analysis of sums paid at the Italian luxury carmaker's annual event in Monterey, California, suggests that, on average, the vehicles sold for 58 per cent more than their estimated sale price.

A 1991 F40, listed at $4.5 million, went for $8.4 million, a 1995 F50 ticketed at $8 million reached $12.1 million and a 2023 Daytona SP3 achieved $17.3 million against an estimate of $11 million.

The results at the leading annual classic car auction were "remarkable", analysts at Jefferies, the US investment bank said, amid a broader luxury sector slowdown. They said that the prices provided "a strong validation of our bullish thesis. Unlike in the broader luxury sector, the recruitment of new customers interested in classic cars is a well functioning mechanism."

Jefferies, which has a buy rating on the Ferrari stock, raised its price target by 12 per cent to €400-a-share against their current price of €360, adding: "We are hopeful that the two upcoming model launches due before year-end will further reinforce this powerful mechanic and underpin the unique growth also offered by Ferrari in the luxury space."

It emerged that the $40 million buyer of the first all-electric Luce to roll off the production line was a billionaire businessman, Herbert Wertheim, 87, who developed the first UV-absorbing dye to protect lenses in glasses.

The sale price was 36 times the auction estimate and about 60 times the expected ticket price when the car goes on sale later this year at €550,000.

Ferrari said the auction price for the one-off vehicle — known as "Chassis 0" — had set a world record for a new car sold at auction, beating the $26 million achieved by a one-off Ferrari Daytona SP3 sold last year.

Initially, the 192mph EV supercar, designed by Apple's former chief designer Sir Jony Ive, received a cool reception, being likened unflatteringly to a Nissan Leaf.

Luca di Montezemolo, who was chairman of Ferrari for more than two decades, said that it did not deserve to wear the marque's famous prancing horse badge.

But Benedetto Vigna, the chief executive, has said the company was "very pleased" with initial orders and it has already hit the Luce's 2026 annual sales target of just under 500 units thanks to strong demand from China.

ALAMY

The record auction sale price for a Daytona SP3, above, last year was beaten by Herbert Wertheim, below, paying $40 million for the Chassis 0 Luce, Ferrari's first electric car

Boat builder behind Mike Lynch's superyacht put up for sale

Chris Dorrell
Technology Business Correspondent

The Italian shipbuilder behind the late tech tycoon Mike Lynch's superyacht, which sank off the coast of Sicily in 2024, has been put up for sale by its parent company.

Perini Navi, which made the Bayesian, is one of several assets that The Italian Sea Group could sell in an effort to secure its future. The Milan-listed company has endured a volatile few months, including large cost overruns, a complex restructuring process and the departure of its chief executive.

Perini Navi built the Bayesian superyacht in 2008, which was originally known as Salute. The Lynch family bought the vessel in 2014. It sank off the coast of Sicily in 2024 during a freak storm, killing Lynch, his daughter and five others. The cause of the disaster is debated. Preliminary findings from local investigators reported in Italian media point towards crew errors, while British maritime experts have blamed "vulnerabilities" with the boat itself.

The Italian Sea Group brought a €456 million claim against the Lynch estate and members of the crew last year, alleging that their actions had inflicted reputational and commercial damage on the shipbuilder. No Perini Navi-branded yachts have been sold since the disaster, according to court filings. The Lynch estate has previously described the claim as "cynical".

The Maltese Falcon, an 88m superyacht built by Perini Navi. The company also made the Lynch family's Bayesian yacht

Beyond the sinking of the Bayesian, The Italian Sea Group has endured a tumultuous few months. In March, the company said it had faced cost overruns after some of its staff, including senior executives, set up a system to bypass spending controls on contracts. The company secured an emergency loan, but still entered Italy's negotiated crisis settlement procedure, a voluntary restructuring framework.

Last month, Giovanni Costantino, the company's chief executive, quit, alongside his son.

The company said it was also putting up Admiral, Picchiotti, and Tecnomar brands up for sale, as well as its Carrara and La Spezia shipyards. It said it had seen a number of unsolicited expressions of interest. The group's shares were down 3.7 per cent yesterday.

Lynch, often dubbed "Britain's Bill Gates", co-founded Autonomy in 1996 and sold the company to Hewlett-Packard for $11.1 billion in 2011. HP later wrote down Autonomy's value by $8.8 billion, accusing Lynch of fraud and revenue manipulation. Lynch was acquitted by a San Francisco court in June 2024, and was celebrating the verdict on the Bayesian when it sank.

Katie Prescott

Gardening leave is choking the economy. Is it time to dig it up?

What would you do if you were given one, two or even three years of gardening leave, on full pay? Yes, really. People do get this much enforced, funded time off.

I asked some of those who had. There were the chronic over-achievers who "could not stop", signing up for courses on topics such as the Roman empire, astronomy or Impressionism. There were the midlife-crisis types, delighted by their midlife-gap years, who talked of climbing mountains, skiing or simply "rebuilding their own house with their own hands", one joked.

It is not always as fun as it sounds, one young financier who was put on the shelf for 18 months told me. They used the time to catch up on advances in machine learning and to play sport, "but after working in an intense environment, it is difficult to live for so long with such little structure, when your friends, partner and family are still working".

There is some merit to limited periods of gardening leave. It is a chance to "do something different, clear your head and start afresh full of energy", one person reflected.

But gardening leave is not about the staff's wellbeing. Employers enact it so you will not walk away with too many company secrets or clients. It is time off, which can include your notice period and any related "non-compete clause" which follows; typically stopping you from joining a direct competitor or starting a rival business for a set period.

Two, or even three years living in such limbo, is the ludicrous period imposed on some elite quant traders and hedge-fund managers.

Restrictions do not just apply to finance or high-paying jobs. Roughly 5 million employees in Britain are bound by contracts with non-compete clauses, typically lasting about six months. They are far more prevalent here than in Europe or the US, according to the London School of Economics. In the UK's fast-paced tech world, where the war for talent is fierce and each day brings a fresh artificial intelligence development, non-competes are particularly damaging. Worse, they create an environment that compares unfavourably to Silicon Valley, where non-competes are banned.

GETTY IMAGES

Outgoing executives with a sudden abundance of free time can hit the slopes

Putting aside whether or not contracts are always enforceable, it is clearly grossly unproductive for someone to be prevented from working for a protracted length of time after they leave a job.

"Damn, is this actually legal over there?" one US-based AI entrepreneur queried on X in a lively discussion this weekend.

Matt Miller, the founder and managing partner of Evantic Capital in London, has repeatedly said that changing Britain's non-compete regime "would be the easiest, cheapest fix to accelerate sovereign AI and economic growth in the UK".

Formerly of Sequoia Capital, the American has worked closely with tech companies on both sides of the Atlantic so has an extremely good understanding of the impact that these clauses are having. Miller argues that for high-performing people it is a prison sentence.

"Taking yourself out of the game for two years makes it almost impossible to come back at the same level and almost no firm wants to hire a candidate and wait two years for them to start," he said.

He is far from the only one calling for change. The message from tech? Let British people start companies and move jobs just as fast as they do in California.

Unsurprisingly, stopping people working harms economic output. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development reported in July that a 10 percentage-point rise in non-compete clause use across an industry is linked to a 1.9 per cent fall in productivity, as workers get stuck in jobs that don't suit them and firms struggle to pick up new people.

Two recent departures of Google AI leaders in the UK and the US seem to highlight how differently stars from the same company are able to exit, depending on the jurisdiction.

In the UK, John Jumper, who shared the 2024 Nobel Prize alongside the DeepMind chair Sir Demis Hassabis for his work on AlphaFold, is taking some "time out" before he moves to Anthropic. In the US, Jeff Dean, who joined Google as employee No 30 in 1999 and rose to chief scientist, also announced he was leaving. Dean immediately jumped into the market and shared his pitch deck on X as he raised billions of dollars for Discovery Loop, a new AI business.

A Google DeepMind spokesman would not comment on company policy but it has been widely reported that the norm is for senior UK staff to be prevented from working or starting their own company for a year after they leave. And as the centre of the UK's AI ecosystem, nurturing researchers and spawning many start-ups, who can blame DeepMind for doing all it can to keep people?

This is not a new discussion. The government closed a consultation into the impact of non-competes this February, with a view to considering curbing gardening leave in some form. Asked about its status, a spokesman for the Department for Business said that while it recognises the important role reforming non-compete clauses could have, no final decisions have been made.

However, the working paper set out by mandarins suggests a particular direction of travel, noting that "non-compete clauses play a part in restricting employee movement, limiting knowledge spillovers, and can undermine incentives for innovation".

Evidence from the UK and abroad, it said, suggests reforming non-compete clauses could loosen up the labour market, help start-ups compete for talent, boost competition, and give millions of workers more freedom to change jobs or start businesses.

Clearly there needs to be a happy medium between the notoriously disloyal Silicon Valley workforce, which changes jobs at a rate of knots, and the stronger ties which bind workers in the UK to their employers and protect intellectual property.

But putting some rules around this runaway situation feels like a free hit for a government which is currently casting around for quick, inexpensive wins. The UK has an amazing pool of AI talent: let's not keep great people dead-heading roses in the garden for too long.

Katie Prescott is Technology Business Editor of The Times

AI revolution isn't causing carnage in jobs market

Chris Dorrell

Over half of British businesses think that their use of artificial intelligence has helped to create more jobs, according to a closely watched survey.

Lloyds Bank's latest business barometer suggests that the most alarming predictions about the potential for AI to disrupt the labour market are not yet being borne out in the data.

The survey showed that 54.4 per cent said adopting AI had created new jobs while 37.1 per cent said it had not and 8.5 per cent said they were not sure.

The survey, which covers more than 1,200 companies with annual revenue of more than £250,000, showed that businesses were preparing to accelerate their adoption plans to remain competitive. Nearly six in ten said that businesses which fail to adopt AI will be at a competitive disadvantage, and 58 per cent plan to increase their investment in the new technology.

Amanda Murphy, head of Lloyds business and commercial banking, said: "AI has the potential to be as transformative for businesses as the internet was a generation ago. The businesses seeing the greatest benefit are treating it not simply as a technology investment, but as a catalyst for broader transformation."

There are mounting concerns that AI could replace swathes of jobs as its capabilities increase, particularly in the knowledge-intensive services sectors.

Dario Amodei, chief executive of Anthropic, has previously warned that AI could destroy 50 per cent of entry-level white collar jobs by the decade's end.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development found that London's labour market was the most "exposed" to generative AI in the 34 countries it considered.

So far, the impact of AI has been most apparent for younger workers in highly exposed sectors, such as software engineering. However, there is little sign of the widespread job losses that tech bosses have warned about. Only about 6 per cent of the businesses using AI for operational improvement have reported a decrease in headcount, while 63 per cent reported no change, according to the latest official data.

The same is true in America. A study last month by the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research found little evidence of AI's impact on the US labour market. The report said: "These aggregate trends suggest a broadly softening labour market, rather than one characterised by AI-driven job losses."

THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES
Tech Summit
The Age of the AI Agent, Who's Really in Control?
Tuesday, November 10, 2026

Speakers include

Aidan Gomez
Co-founder & CEO at Cohere

Dr. Ross Harper
Co-Founder & CEO at Limbic

Judith Dada
Co-CEO, Langdock and Senior Partner at Visionaries

Go to thetimes.com/events or use the QR code to book now

Headline Sponsor
Adobe

DISCOVER NEOM

Artists' impressions of the planned desert city of Neom, above and below right

Saudi wealth fund scales back plan for 'mega-city'

Samer Al-Atrush
Middle East Correspondent

Saudi Arabia's trillion-dollar wealth fund signalled that it is slowing down and scaling back plans to build a futuristic region in Neom including a "linear city" as it focuses on profits.

The Public Investment Fund (PIF), which is chaired by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, is tasked with steering ambitious reforms meant to diversify the country's economy and turn the once ultra-conservative kingdom into a regional finance and tourism hub. Neom had been the centre of the plan but the project has been plagued by delays and setbacks.

The kingdom has withdrawn from hosting the 2029 Asian Winter Games that were scheduled to take place at an unfinished mountain resort in Neom with artificial snow, while its main project, a 112-mile-long horizontal skyscraper known as The Line, has all but been abandoned, with many workers leaving the site over the past year.

In its annual 2025 report released this week, the PIF said its goals remained but it would try to deliver them in stages and based on profitability.

"While the ambitions of Neom remain unchanged — including the reimagined industrial city Oxagon, cognitive city The Line, mountain destination Trojena, the Nature Region, luxury coastal destination Magna and the Islands of Neom — its delivery model has evolved toward phased implementation and commercially driven prioritisation to ensure progress is measurable, resilient and financially sustainable over time," the PIF said.

The kingdom has previously suggested it was shifting course on the project as it pivoted to building artificial intelligence data centres planned for Neom.

The announcement came alongside annual results which showed the sovereign wealth fund posted a 4.2 per cent decline in total shareholder return in 2025, driven by a fall in the valuations of some assets, "as a result of wider market conditions". Revenue rose 9 per cent to $120 billion between January and December 2025 while net profit more than doubled to $17 billion. Local investments represented 76 per cent of total assets under management, while international investments and treasury accounted for the remaining 20 per cent and 4 per cent respectively.

The Line alone had been projected to cost about $1 trillion, with half of the funding expected from the private sector and foreign investment. Saudi Arabia struggled to attract the hoped-for foreign investment as questions swirled over the project's feasibility and its management under the former chief executive Nadhmi al-Nasr.

Al-Nasr was sacked in 2024 after the crown prince was left unimpressed with the expensive but lacklustre launch of Sindalah, an island yacht resort that forms part of Neom. His replacement, the PIF veteran Aiman al-Mudaifer, has since clamped down on excessive spending.

The PIF said the project's future would be "focused on phased execution, commercial sustainability and the development of priority sectors including artificial intelligence, logistics and clean energy".

Critics said they felt vindicated, having advised that some of Neom's aspects were fantastical and opened the country to ridicule. One complained that it had given investors the idea that the Saudis had more money than sense.

However, Prince Mohammed has ambitions to turn a kingdom once synonymous with oil into a financial and tourism destination rivalling the neighbouring United Arab Emirates.

We're The Business

From start ups to tech titans, market movers to City CEOs, our weekly podcast dissects the biggest stories in business with the entrepreneurs living through them.

SPONSORED BY pwc

Find The Business wherever you get your podcasts

THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

Finance firm agrees to £55m takeover by Joe Lewis lender

Helen Cahill Financial Correspondent

A finance firm backed by the family office of Joe Lewis has agreed a £55.13 million deal for Aim-listed Time Finance.

Ultimate Finance, a loan provider backed by the British billionaire's Tavistock Group, has secured board approval for a cash bid for Time Finance, a lender to small businesses.

Investors are set to receive 59.1p per share in cash if the deal goes ahead, representing a premium of 12.6 per cent to the group's undisturbed share price.

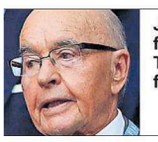
Time Finance is an alternative lending specialist that provides loans to small and medium-sized businesses across the UK. The company was founded in 2000 and first listed on the junior division of the London stock market in 2006. It employs about 150 people and operates across four UK offices in Bath, Reading, Manchester and Warrington.

Ultimate Finance was founded in 2002 and has offices in London, Bristol, Lutterworth, Leeds and Edinburgh. Its loan book comprised invoice finance lending of about £165 million, asset finance lending worth about £165 million, and bridging loans worth about £99 million as of June 30.

Bentley Park, the parent company of Ultimate Finance, has already received backing from about 47.4 per cent of Time Finance's investors for the acquisition, which will require the approval of 75 per cent of shareholders.

Josh Levy, chief executive of Ultimate Finance and co-chief executive of Tavistock, said the merger "would create a stronger, more scalable specialist lending platform with broader capabilities".

Gary Greenwood, analyst at Shore Capital, said the deal would create a small business lender with "broader product capabilities" and lending of almost £650 million.



Joe Lewis, who formerly owned Tottenham Hotspur football club

Lewis owns a large number of assets through his Tavistock Group portfolio. The Bahamas-based holding company has amassed stakes in more than 200 businesses spanning property, hospitality, restaurants, energy retail, technology, agriculture and finance since its launch in 1975.

Lewis previously owned Tottenham Hotspur football club through Enic Group but transferred his majority stake to the Lewis Family Trust in October 2022.

The fast fashion giant hosted an event at the O Beach club in Ibiza at the start of the summer season

Shein cuts valuation to $25bn before float

Shein, the online fast fashion retailer, is targeting a valuation in its planned Hong Kong flotation of just a quarter of the nearly $100 billion tapped in a share sale four years ago, according to sources.

Two people familiar with the situation said Shein's value was likely to be about $25 billion in the IPO, while a third source said the company was looking at a valuation of between $25 billion and $28 billion.

The decline comes after the biggest markets for Shein, which has its headquarters in Singapore, cracked down on e-commerce platforms selling cheap Chinese-made goods, bearing down on its growth prospects.

Founded in China in 2012 and known for selling £5 dresses and £10 jeans to shoppers in about 160 countries, Shein is aiming to launch its much-awaited initial public offering later this week.

The company plans to issue up to 8 per cent of its total shares in the IPO, meaning a $25 billion valuation would translate to be an offering size of up to $2 billion.

The latest company valuation target is lower than the $30 billion to $40 billion that Shein was aiming for at the beginning of this month, soon after it began investor meetings.

Shein's steep valuation downsizing in the IPO underscores how slower growth, higher trade costs, tighter regulatory scrutiny and intensifying competition across global e-commerce platforms have dampened investor appetite for the business.

The group swung to a $99 million quarterly loss in the first quarter of 2026 as sales slowed after the US removed an import duty exemption on small packages.

Another factor weighing on its valuation was a hefty one-time accounting charge, according to its filings to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in July.

Some investors, who attended IPO presentations or reviewed recent financial statements, told Reuters they were not convinced Shein could return to the growth rates that valued it at $98.2 billion in a 2022 fundraising round.

A lower valuation could weigh on Shein's financials, as under the terms of its IPO filing, the company would be required to provide extra shares to certain pre-IPO investors if the valuation falls below agreed thresholds.

Shein first filed for an IPO in London about 18 months ago, but its application was beset by political sensitivities over its supply chain and failure to secure approval from Chinese regulators.

It had originally been hoping to list in New York but this plan came unstuck following opposition from American politicians.

Beauty brand thanks the lipstick effect for glow-up

Isabella Fish Retail Editor

Global expansion and relentless demand for beauty products delivered another profit and sales boost for Charlotte Tilbury.

Profit before tax at the make-up and beauty brand grew 14.98 per cent to £21 million in the year to the end of December, while turnover rose 10.66 per cent to £539 million.

The company said this was a result of "consistent" growth across existing markets, alongside further market and channel expansion, notably launching in Mexico and the debut of Charlotte Tilbury in the Amazon Premium Beauty Store in the United States.

Beauty brands have continued to thrive during the cost of living crisis as consumers forgo splurges on holidays or designer accessories in favour of smaller, affordable luxuries — often called the "lipstick effect".

Since launching Charlotte Tilbury Beauty at Selfridges in 2013, the business has expanded into 57 markets, employs more than 3,000 people globally and sells through more than 5,000 points of distribution worldwide. These include retail counters, department stores, its "Beauty Wonderlands" store in Covent Garden and via its own website. The company sells more than 500 products across skincare, colour, complexion and fragrance categories. It employed 1,012 people at the end of the latest financial year, up about 19 per cent on the year before.

In 2020 the Spanish beauty group Puig — pronounced "pooch" — bought a majority stake , in a deal that valued it at about £1.2 billion. It is the largest contributor to Puig's make-up division.

In a recent interview with The Times, Tilbury said her ambition was to build the "biggest make-up brand in the world", generating revenue over £8 billion. The largest beauty brand is Chanel, while the biggest group is L'Oréal.

Charlotte Tilbury is best known for her "Magic Cream", a moisturiser she spent years mixing backstage for models and celebrities, and Pillow Talk, which evolved from a single lip liner into one of the beauty industry's most successful franchises.

Astra's drug trials under microscope

Alex Ralph Chief Business Correspondent

AstraZeneca has announced positive results in two late-stage lung cancer trials but discontinued a third study for a potential blockbuster amid heightened investor scrutiny of its drug pipeline.

The FTSE 100 company said that the Saffron phase three trial showed positive high-level results with the existing blockbuster cancer drug Tagrisso plus Orpathys delivering an improvement in survival rates compared with chemotherapy in patients with a type of non-small-cell lung cancer. The Saffron trial was among a number of key late-stage trial results identified by AstraZeneca expected in the second half of this year.

Separately, AstraZeneca announced positive high-level results from its Destiny-Lung04 phase three trial, with Enhertu, another existing breast cancer drug, showing a "statistically significant and clinically meaningful improvement" in so-called progression-free survival as first-line treatment for non-small-cell lung cancer. The trial will continue to evaluate secondary targets, including an improvement in overall patient survival.

Analysts at Citi have forecast peak year sales of about $500 million from the Saffron trial and a "modest opportunity" of about $145 million from the Destiny trial.

However, in a third late-stage trial update, AstraZeneca said it was discontinuing its eVOLVE-Lung02 phase three trial, which was evaluating volrustomig in combination with chemotherapy as a first-line therapy in patients with non-small-cell lung cancer.

Analysts at Bank of America said about $1.6 billion of peak year sales had been forecast from the study and although it was deemed "high risk", the failure brought AstraZeneca's pipeline "risk back into focus" and may increase further investor caution on the strength of its oncology pipeline ahead of a "patent cliff". Shares in AstraZeneca closed up 0.9 per cent, or 100p, at £115.60 on the London Stock Exchange.

The shares remain down about 15 per cent this year, weakened by the unexpected failure in July of a phase three trial for Wainua, a potential blockbuster heart disease drug, as well as a surprise report this month that AstraZeneca was exploring a mega merger with Bristol Myers Squibb, of the US. The news has unsettled investors and raised questions over AstraZeneca's belief in the strength of its drugs pipeline.

The Cambridge-based company is seeking to grow beyond its headline $80 billion 2030 group sales target, set at its Cambridge investor event in May 2024, and to overcome the loss of patent protection to three existing blockbuster cancer drugs, Tagrisso, Calquence and Imfinzi, around the early 2030s.

The Wainua setback has also raised pressure on the results of two other potential significant blockbusters in phase three trials: the Serena-4 phase three trial for camizestrant in first-line breast cancer and the Avanzar phase three trial of Datroway in first-line lung cancer. Investors are keenly awaiting the results for both.

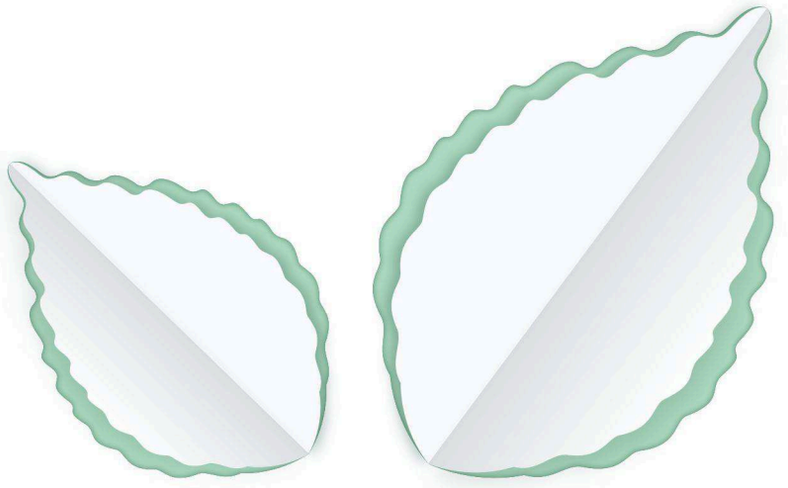
The transformation of Astra's pipeline, balance sheet and share price over the past decade has been propelled by the success of innovative cancer drugs.

Sir Pascal Soriot, who has led AstraZeneca since 2012 and defended it from a £69 billion takeover attempt by Pfizer two years later, reiterated the company's $80 billion target when he presented half-year results in late July.

Sean Conroy, an analyst at Shore Capital, said the two successful trial results announced yesterday were "more incremental and should help sustain sales momentum for Tagrisso, where the majority of sales opportunity resides in frontline treatment, and Enhertu, where the majority of sales opportunity resides in breast cancer". He added that regarding the failed study, trials of volrustomig in other cancers continue as part of a wider programme, so there remained "several more shots on goal".

In a statement alongside the Saffron read-out yesterday, Susan Galbraith, an executive vice-president for oncology haematology R&D at AstraZeneca, said it "further strengthens our leadership in EGFR-mutated [epidermal growth factor receptor, a protein that fuels cell growth] lung cancer, reinforcing our strategy to improve patient outcomes across stages and through lines of therapy with novel combinations".

Referring to the termination of the eVOLVE study, Galbraith said: "While we are disappointed, we will learn from this trial and are determined to continue pioneering new medicines from our industry-leading pipeline in our quest to improve outcomes for patients with lung cancer."



PAPER LOVES TREES

European forests, which provide wood for making paper, paper packaging and many other products, have been growing by 1,500 football pitches every day!

Source: Two Sides Analysis of FAO data, 2005-2020
European Forests: EU27 + Norway, Switzerland and the UK

Discover the story of paper
www.lovepaper.org
Scan for paper facts, activities, blogs and much more!

LOVE PAPER®

The Times unit trust information service

ALLIANZ GLOBAL INVESTORS

Inv Serv: 020 7065 1400 Helpline: 0800 317 573

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Strategic Bond Fund ‡	130.03		-0.13	8.07
UK Equity A ‡	398.87		-1.00	3.96
UK Growth ‡	10388.08		-59.43	2.22

ARTEMIS FUND MGRS

0800 092 2051

Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Global Income Fund R Acc ‡	386.45		+1.06	...
Global Income Fund R Inc ‡	217.32		+0.6	...
Global Select Fund R ‡	230.61		+1.21	...
High Income Fund R Inc ‡	67.01		-0.17	...
Income Fund R Acc ‡	805.8		-2.58	...
Income Fund R Inc ‡	308.85		-0.99	...
Monthly Dist & R Inc ‡	92.88		+0.16	...
SmartGarp Eurp Equity R ‡	905.69		+4.41	...
SmartGarp Global Equity R ‡	702.64		+1.23	...
SmartGarp UK Equity R ‡	4311.89		+19.1	...
Strategic Assets R Acc ‡	95.03		+0.04	...
Strategic Bd R M Acc ‡	116.52		-0.12	...
Strategic Bd R M Inc ‡	52.68		-0.05	...
Strategic Bd R Q Acc ‡	116.31		-0.12	...
Strategic Bd R Q Inc ‡	52.54		-0.06	...
UK Select R Acc ‡	1349.46		-0.98	...
Uk Smaller Cos R Acc ‡	2353.57		-10.45	...
UK Special Sits R Acc ‡	1109.17		-5.39	...

AXA FRAMLINGTON UNIT MGMT

Dling: 0845 602 1952 Priv Clients:0845 777 5511

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Health ‡	3370		-17.00	...
UK Select Opps Inc ‡	2131		-7.00	1.10
UK Sml Cos Inc ‡	332.3		-0.60	0.37
UK Sust Eqty R Dis ‡	235.8		-0.80	1.10

AXA FUND MANAGERS

Admin & Enq 0117 989 0808

UK/Global Investment Companies

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Global Gwth Acc R ‡	288.1		...	0.52
Japan Acc A ‡	162.3		...	1.51

CIS UNIT MANAGERS

08457 46 46 46

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
European Growth ‡	298.7		-0.10	1.14
Sus Leaders ‡	1031		-0.29	1.47
UK Growth ‡@	878.1		-0.03	1.69
UK Income ‡@	257.7		-0.23	3.83

CLOSE FUND MANAGEMENT

Dealing 020 7426 6232

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Winchester ‡	5731.83		...	0.60

COLUMBIA THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS

Enqs:0870 601 6183 Dealing: 0870 6083

Share Class 1-Retail

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Gwth & Inc ‡	1629		+7	0.10
FTSE All Shr Track ‡	595.7		...	2.70
Global Gwth SCI ‡	404.9		-1.7	...
Strategic Bd ‡	228.9		-0.2	3.90

EDENTREE INV MGMT

0800 358 3010

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Sust Eur Eqty A Dis ‡	498.1		-1.40	1.85
Sust Gbl Eqty A Dis ‡	464.1		-1.70	0.53
Sust Mgd Income ‡	141.8		-0.10	4.01
Sust Sterling Bond A Dis ‡	85.1		-0.15	4.97
Sust UK Eqty A Dis ‡@	255.4		-0.80	1.74
Sust UK Eqty Opps A Dis ‡	328.7		-1.10	1.46

FIDELITY INTERNATIONAL

Private Clnts:0800 414161 Broker Dlgs:0800 414181

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Spec ‡	2944		...	...
American ‡	8116		...	...
Euro Opps ‡	746.4		...	0.48
European ‡	4468		...	0.76
Global Focus ‡	3740		...	...
Global High Income Bond A Dis ‡	22.39		...	6.38
Global Special Sits ‡	9043		...	...
Japan ‡	1009		...	0.33
Moneyblder Bal ‡	48.47		...	0.61
Moneyblder Inc ‡	28.2		...	5.03
Moneyblder UK Ind ‡	201.5		...	2.49
Special Sits ‡	7537		...	1.64

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Opportunities Fund A Dis ‡	105.9		...	1.43

HALIFAX INVESTMENT FUND MGRS

01296 386 386

Authorised Inv Funds

Share Class C

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corporate Bond ‡	37.30		...	4.50
Intl Gwth ‡	217.0		...	0.60
UK FTSE 100 IT ‡	108.2		...	...
UK FTSE All-S IT ‡	120.4		...	...

HSBC GLOBAL ASSET MGMT (UK)

Enq:0845 745 6123 Dlg:0845 745 6126 Mon-Frid:8-6

HSBC Index Tracker Investment Funds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Ind Acc ‡	1641		-7	0.77
Euro Ind Acc ‡	1864		-6	2.27
Euro Ind Inc ‡	1080		-4	2.32
FTSE 100 Ind Acc ‡	439.3		...	2.51
FTSE 100 Ind Inc ‡	178.3		...	2.66
FTSE 250 Ind Acc ‡	412.7		-0.9	2.85
FTSE 250 Ind Inc ‡	223.8		-0.5	2.84
FTSE All-S Acc ‡	1107		-1	2.67
FTSE FTSE All-S Inc ‡	498.2		-0.2	2.80
Japan Ind Acc ‡	239.7		-0.8	1.41
Japan Ind Inc ‡	173.9		-0.7	1.45
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	1084		+1	1.52
Pacific Ind Inc ‡	613.3		+0.4	1.55

HSBC Investment Funds (OEIC) Retail Share Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bd Acc ‡@	311.6		-0.6	4.20
Income Acc ‡	1062		...	3.28
Income Inc ‡@	398.5		...	3.34
Monthly Inc Acc ‡@	313.4		...	3.75
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	155.9		...	4.02
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Acc ‡@	224.2		+0.2	3.00
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Inv ‡@	86.88		+0.07	3.06

HSBC Specialist Investment Fds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American Index Retail Inc ‡	1264		-5	0.76

INVESCO FUND MGRS LTD

Dling:0800 085 8571 Inv Serv:0800 085 8677

Brkr Serv:0800 028 2121

Invesco Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond ‡	231.3		...	4.07
High Income Dis ‡	430.33		...	3.17
Income & Growth Dis ‡	502.84		...	3.11
Income Inc ‡	1661.41		...	2.88
Money Acc ‡	107.92		...	3.64
Monthly Inc Plus Dis ‡	92.23		...	5.74
UK Opps UK Acc ‡	1390.13		...	1.47
UK Sml Cos Eqty Acc ‡	1367.15		...	1.20

INVESTEC FUND MGRS LTD

Broker Support and Dealing: 020 7597 1900

OEIC Series I, ii,iii & iv

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American A Acc ‡	880.36		-4.75	...
Cautious Managed A Acc ‡	471.13		-0.46	2.62
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡	270.01		-0.22	2.48
Diversified Growth A Acc ‡	333.22		-0.47	0.20
Diversified Growth Inc ‡	122.63		-0.18	0.94
Diversified Income A Acc ‡	376.58		-0.26	3.78
Diversified Income A Inc ‡	67.81		-0.05	5.20
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Ac ‡	144.28		-0.24	5.97
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Inc ‡	66.83		-0.12	7.67
Emerging Mkts Equity A Ac ‡	294.89		+1.28	0.04
Emerging Mkts Leaders A Acc ‡	1252.58		+7.84	...
Global Equity A Acc ‡	303.08		-1.19	...
Global Franchise A Acc ‡	405.23		-1.72	...
Global Free Enterprise A Acc ‡	2117.5		-8.27	...
Global Gold A Acc ‡	569.57		+12.7	...
Global Special Situations A Acc ‡	538.08		-2.09	...

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Global Special Situations A Inc ‡	412.8		-1.6	...
UK Special Situations A Acc ‡	2765.59		-26.56	1.02
UK Special Situations A Inc ‡	951.11		-9.13	1.03

For ISIS Asset Mgmt see F&C Fd Mgmt Ltd (OEIC)

JANUS HENDERSON INVESTORS

Investor Serv: 0800 832 831 Dlng:0845 946 4646

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
All Stcks Credit A Inc ‡	113.5		...	4.50
Asian Div Inc U Trust Inc ‡	100.4		...	5.60
Cautious Managed Fd A Acc ‡	357.1		...	3.80
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡	153.2		...	3.90
China Opp Fund A Acc ‡	1318		...	0.10
Emg Mkts Opps Fd A Acc ‡	306.2		...	...
Erpn Sel Opps Fd A Acc ‡	3255		...	0.20
Fix IntMnthly Inc Fd Acc ‡	33.21		...	5.90
Global Equity Fund Acc ‡	6673		...	...
Global Equity Income A Ac ‡	88.74		...	2.30
Global Tech A Acc ‡	7179		...	...
Instl UK idx Opps A Acc ‡	178.4499		...	2.10
M-Asset Abs Rtn A Acc ‡	187.9		...	2.70
M-Man Active Fd A Acc ‡	339.8		-0.1	1.80
M-Man Inc Grth A Inc ‡	163.5		...	2.80
M-Man Inc Fd Grth A Acc ‡	234.2		...	2.70
Sterling Bond U Trst Acc ‡	229.5		...	4.30
Sterling Bond U Trst Inc ‡	55.44		...	4.30
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡	95.62		...	5.70
UK Abs Ret Fd A Acc ‡	206.7		...	2.10
UK Alpha Fund A Acc ‡	200.9		...	1.20
US Growth Fund A Acc ‡	3059		...	...

J.P. MORGAN ASSET MANAGEMENT

OEIC

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Equity Core E Net Acc ‡@	708.8000		+0.1000	2.53

JUPITER UT TRUST MANAGERS LTD

020 7581 3020

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Distribution & Growth ‡	125.06		-0.5205	2.93
Euro Special Sits ‡	606.3		-0.0140	0.71
European ‡	4035.46		-0.0137	0.61
Financial Opps ‡	1372.04		+0.1497	1.01
Global Macro Bd L GBP ACC ‡	426.63		-0.7185	3.87
Merlin Bal Acc ‡	347.42		-0.7667	2.26
Merlin Growth Acc ‡	837.71		-0.7510	0.20
Merlin Inc Acc ‡@	471.32		-0.6914	3.40
Merlin Wwide Inc ‡	613.15		-0.2939	...
UK Dynamic Equity L Dis ‡	293.04		-0.5736	1.75
UK Growth ‡	282.72		-0.8329	0.64
UK Income Trust ‡	1015.24		-0.5234	4.58

TRAILFINDERS
THE TRAVEL EXPERTS
ALL YOUR ARRANGEMENTS IN ONE PLACE
Trustpilot
No.1 TOUR OPERATOR
First & Business Class Holidays & Flights 020 7368 1400
Corporate Travel 020 7368 1499
Worldwide Holidays & Flights 020 7368 1200
Cruise Holidays 020 7368 1300
IATA
ATOL LICENCE: 1458
caa.co.uk
TRAILFINDERS FINANCIAL GUARANTEE
TF TRUST
CYBER ESSENTIALS CERTIFIED
Which? Awards
NO ONE LOOKS AFTER YOU BETTER

LEGAL & GENERAL (UT MANGRS) LTD

Enquiries: 0870 050 0955 Dealing: 0870 050 0956

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Ind Acc ‡@	817.9		-0.3	1.90
Euro Ind Inc ‡@	488.4		-0.2	1.90
Fixed Int Acc ‡	150.2		-0.2	4.60
Fixed Int Dist ‡	62.06		-0.11	4.60
Global Health ‡	123.3		...	0.90
Glob Tech Acc ‡@	241.4		...	...
High Inc Acc ‡@	154.6		...	5.70
Japan Ind Acc ‡	115.1		-0.3	1.20
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	427.2		+0.6	1.30
UK Index Trust Acc ‡	537.6		-0.2	2.50
Uk Index Trust Dist ‡	232.7		-0.1	2.50
US Ind Acc ‡	1436		...	0.50
Worldwide Acc ‡	473.7		-0.4	0.90

M&G SECURITIES

Enq:0800 390 390 Dealing Line: 0800 328 3196

Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Charifund Inc ‡@	1899.8		+0.44	5.13

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 2

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Extra Income Inc ‡	824.85		-0.3	5.11
Gilt & Fxd Int Inc ‡	66.89		-0.15	4.40
Gl Hi Yd Bd Inc ‡@	39.89		...	6.24
Index Linked Bd Inc ‡	101.55		-0.26	1.56
Index Trckr Inc ‡	104.45		-0.02	3.01
Short Dated Corp Bd Inc ‡	25.36		...	4.25
UK Select A Inc ‡	3294.07		-23.11	2.65

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 3

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bd A Inc ‡@	32.74		-0.07	5.03
Dividend Inc ‡@	66.39		-0.03	5.38
Recovery A Inc ‡@	142.16		+0.33	2.85
Sml Cos Inc ‡@	364.98		+0.44	2.81

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 4

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Episode Allocation A Inc ‡@	161.5		-0.38	3.80

MARKS & SPENCER UNIT TRUST

0808 005 5555

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
High Income ‡	87.38		...	4.60
High Income Acc ‡	298.2		...	4.60
UK 100 Comp Acc ‡	717.3		...	3.10
UK 100 Comp Inc ‡	322.7		...	3.10
UK Select Port ‡	481.5		...	2.90
UK Select Port Acc ‡	1101.5		...	2.90
W'wide Mgd Acc ‡@	1347		...	0.20
Worldwide Mgd Acc ‡@	749.9		...	0.20

MORGAN STANLEY INVESTMENT MGMT

Enquiries: 0800 0961 962

The Morgan Stanley Funds (UK)

Class A Shares

Equity

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Glob Bal Inc F F Acc ‡	1049.40		...	1.54
Glob Bal Inc F F Inc ‡	938.65		...	1.55
Glob Bal Inc F I Inc ‡	936.69		...	1.49
Glob Bal Inc F I Acc ‡	1046.53		...	1.47
Glob Bal Sust F F Acc ‡	1036.68		...	1.65
Glob Bal Sust F F Inc ‡	989.88		...	1.66
Glob Bal Sust F I Acc ‡	1034.12		...	1.57
Glob Bal Sust F I Inc ‡	989.45		...	1.60
Glob Br Eq Fund F Inc ‡	1103.02		...	4.33
Glob Br Eq Fund I Acc ‡	1737.57		...	4.29
Glob Br Eq Fund I Inc ‡	1166.06		...	4.41
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	14170.79		...	0.32
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡	1643.75		...	0.45
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	1752.06		...	0.45
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡	3811.48		...	0.32
Glob Quality Fund F Acc (PH) ‡	1555.07		...	0.49
Glob Quality Fund F Inc ‡	1513.62		...	0.51
Glob Quality Fund I Acc ‡	1555.46		...	0.34
Glob Quality Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	1549.63		...	0.34
Glob Quality Fund F Acc ‡	1571.92		...	0.51
Stg Corp Bond F F Acc ‡	144.4		...	4.89
Stg Corp Bond F F Inc ‡	97.92		...	4.91
Stg Corp Bond F I Inc ‡	1378.93		...	4.74
Stg Corp Bond F I Acc ‡	3054.71		...	4.74
US Adv F F Acc ‡	2469.91		...	...
US Adv F F Acc (PH) ‡	1489.76		...	...
US Adv F I Acc ‡	2600.43		...	...
US Adv F I Acc (PH) ‡	1542.41		...	...

SANTANDER UNIT TST MGRS

08457 413002

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Equity Inc Inc ‡	236.2		...	...
Stkmkt 100 Tkr ‡	230.8000		...	...
UK Growth I Acc ‡	653.0		...	...
UK Growth Inc ‡	313.6		...	...

SCOTTISH MUTUAL INV MNGRES LTD

0141 248 6100

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Far Eastern Inc	617.0700	649.4700	...	...
Mutual Far Eastern	1393.8500	1471.0800	+5.48	0.39
Mutual UK Eq	1429.4900	1508.7000	...	7.81
UK Equity Inc	562.2300	593.3800	...	7.81

SCOTTISH WIDOWS UNIT TRUST MNGRS

0845 300 2244

Overseas Growth Investment Funds

Tracker & Special Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr A Acc ‡	601.8		-1.00	2.50
UK Trkr A Inc ‡	273.9		-0.40	2.50

UK & Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond A Acc ‡@	328.6		-0.80	4.00
Corp Bond A Inc ‡@	107.8		-0.20	4.00
Envir Invtr A Acc ‡	470.5		-4.00	2.10
Hi Inc Bond A Ac ‡@	300.7		+1.70	6.40
Hi Inc Bond A Inc ‡@	70.85		+0.39	6.40
Hi Res A Acc ‡	560.3		-0.20	3.70
Hi Res A Inc ‡	151.7		...	3.80
Strat In A Acc ‡@	228.7		-0.30	4.50
Strat In A Inc ‡@	86.15		-0.13	4.50
UK Eq Trckr A ‡	135.8		-0.20	2.50

OEIC B Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr B Acc ‡	666.7		-1.10	2.60
UK Trkr B Inc ‡	272.3		-0.50	2.60

OEIC C Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Eq Tkr C ‡	132.6		-0.20	2.60

STANDARD LIFE INVESTMENTS

0845 279 3003

Investment Funds (OEIC)-Retail Shares

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
AAA Inc CAT Acc ‡	98.45		...	2.52
AAA Inc CAT Inc ‡	51.1		...	2.52
AAA Income Acc ‡	108.60		...	...
Amer Eq Gth Acc ‡	297.00		...	...
Glb Advtg CAT Acc ‡	203.4		...	1.32
Glob Advtg Acc ‡	268.20		...	...
Higher Inc Acc ‡	186.20		...	...
Higher Inc Inc ‡	48.19		...	...
Managed Acc ‡	525.7		...	1.83
UK Ethical Acc ‡	258.70		...	...
UK Smlr Cos Acc ‡	823.30		...	...

SVS BROWN SHIPLEY FUNDS

Enquiries:0141 222 1151

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Balanced A Acc ‡	187.43		...	2.02
Blanced A Inc ‡	158.62		...	2.07
Cautious A Acc ‡	133.51		...	2.44
Cautious A Inc ‡	105.59		...	2.48
Dynamic A Acc ‡	501.81		...	1.40
Dynamic A Inc ‡	439.05		...	1.41
Growth A Acc ‡	495.29		...	1.63
Income A Acc ‡	320.25		...	2.17

THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS

Client Serv: 0800 0684000

Retail Shares Class 1

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Threadneedle HY Bd Rtl Inc ‡	39.431		+1.44	...
Threadneedle Mnthly Etr Inc Inc ‡	101.1745		-47.26	...
Threadneedle SterlingCorp Bd Inc ‡	54.803		-13.77	...
Threadneedle SterlingCorp Acc ‡	54.6987		-13.89	...
Threadneedle Stg Bd Ret Inc ‡	39.4407		-15.49	...
Threadneedle Strat Bd Ret ‡	41.82		-5.37	...
Threadneedle UK Eq Inc Rtl Inc ‡	118.9226		-57.79	...
Threadneedle UK Growth & inc Rtl Inc ‡	111.9231		-77.31	...
Threadneedle UK Istl Rtl ‡	249.5612		-11.83	...
Threadneedle UK Mnthly Inc Rtl Inc ‡	89.3903		-42.92	...
Threadneedle UK Rtl Inc ‡	166.944		-80.97	...
Theadneedle U Smaller Coms Rtl Inc ‡	409.8052		+179.49	...

For Resolution see Ignis

TU FUND MANAGERS LTD

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
IFSL Marlborough Eur A Dis @	1001	1001	...	1.22

* Yield expressed as CAR (Compound Annual Return); † Ex dividend; ‡Middle price; . . . No significant data. # Periodic charge deducted from capital; @ Exit charge

British funds

Index-Linked

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
73.08	63.68	Tr IL 0 ½% 50	63.75	– .20	0.78	2.56
66.33	57.06	Tr IL 0 ¼% 52	56.89	– .23	0.44	2.55
101.91	97.20	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 28	99.77	+ .09	0.13	0.24
100.99	97.18	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 29	98.69	+ .10	0.13	0.63
98.88	94.73	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 31	96.09	+ .14	0.13	0.93
88.33	82.97	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 36	83.61	– .04	0.15	1.89
82.85	76.16	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 39	77.43	– .08	0.16	2.18
79.32	72.11	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 41	72.73	– .10	0.17	2.29
74.05	65.19	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 44	66.85	– .16	0.19	2.46
71.23	62.87	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 46	63.19	– .24	0.20	2.52
68.00	59.19	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 48	59.49	– .22	0.21	2.54
60.61	50.05	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 56	50.09	– .29	0.25	2.48
58.90	48.59	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 58	49.11	– .25	0.25	2.45
54.25	43.57	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 65	43.78	– .34	0.29	2.31
53.89	40.40	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 68	42.70	– .34	0.29	2.26
57.66	42.98	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 73	44.00	– .35	0.28	1.97
97.88	93.36	Tr IL 0 ¾% 34	94.11	+ .06	0.80	1.58
79.12	70.87	Tr IL 0 ¾% 47	71.19	– .18	1.05	2.51
62.70	49.79	Tr IL 0 ⅜% 62	51.78	– .32	0.72	2.40
87.38	80.77	Tr IL 0 ⅝% 40	81.11	– .10	0.77	2.24
84.28	76.46	Tr IL 0 ⅝% 42	76.74	– .14	0.81	2.36
104.16	100.95	Tr IL 1 ¼% 27	101.42	+ .08	1.23	0.13
103.67	99.28	Tr IL 1 ¼% 32	100.12	+ .13	1.25	1.23
86.56	72.33	Tr IL 1 ¼% 54	74.24	– .29	1.68	2.53
85.60	73.36	Tr IL 1 ¼% 55	73.79	– .32	1.69	2.52
99.52	94.19	Tr IL 1 ⅛% 35	94.76	+ .01	1.19	1.75
97.09	90.76	Tr IL 1 ⅛% 37	91.31	– .04	1.23	1.99
102.53	95.86	Tr IL 1 ¾% 38	96.56	– .04	1.81	2.07
99.42	88.49	Tr IL 1 ⅞% 49	88.86	– .28	2.11	2.51
248.27	236.46	Tr IL 2% 35	241.64	+ .20	0.83	1.71
349.35	338.41	Tr IL 4 ⅛% 30	342.76	+ .44	1.20	0.79

Longs (Over 15 Years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
26.99	22.27	Tr 0 ½% 61	22.35	– .10	2.24	5.54
65.04	55.40	Tr 0 ⅛% 51	55.81	– .21	0.22	2.56
38.39	32.78	Tr 0 ⅝% 50	33.28	– .18	1.88	5.78
47.60	40.99	Tr 1 ½% 53	41.37	– .20	3.63	5.85
45.88	39.62	Tr 1 ¼% 51	40.08	– .21	3.12	5.84
33.04	27.53	Tr 1 ⅛% 73	27.47	– .11	4.10	5.36
48.44	41.88	Tr 1 ¾% 57	42.09	– .22	4.16	5.80
48.36	41.73	Tr 1 ⅝% 54	42.20	– .21	3.85	5.82
41.45	35.65	Tr 1 ⅝% 71	35.65	– .15	4.56	5.50
57.14	49.76	Tr 2 ½% 65	50.02	– .22	5.00	5.71
74.02	64.55	Tr 3 ½% 68	65.06	– .29	5.38	5.70
81.50	72.00	Tr 3 ¾% 52	72.74	– .29	5.16	5.79
80.90	71.30	Tr 3 ¾% 53	71.89	– .30	5.22	5.82
88.15	77.58	Tr 4 ¼% 55	78.28	– .31	5.43	5.80
83.52	73.44	Tr 4% 60	73.82	– .32	5.42	5.78

Mediums (5-15 Years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
83.19	79.47	Tr 0 ¼% 31	81.32	– .08	0.31	4.50
86.27	82.79	Tr 0 ⅜% 30	84.61	– .07	0.44	4.45
72.25	67.14	Tr 0 ⅝% 35	68.65	– .11	0.91	5.02
79.97	75.46	Tr 0 ⅞% 33	76.93	– .10	1.14	4.82
48.97	42.75	Tr 0 ⅞% 46	43.46	– .20	2.01	5.74
54.44	47.82	Tr 1 ½% 47	48.44	– .23	3.10	5.78
61.88	55.55	Tr 1 ¼% 41	56.71	– .19	2.20	5.49
66.75	60.85	Tr 1 ⅛% 39	62.17	– .17	1.81	5.32
75.83	69.99	Tr 1 ¾% 37	71.16	– .16	2.46	5.22
55.77	49.19	Tr 1 ¾% 49	49.64	– .22	3.53	5.79
85.07	81.01	Tr 1% 32	82.56	– .08	1.21	4.66
82.54	74.42	Tr 3 ½% 45	75.25	– .24	4.65	5.68
95.49	90.74	Tr 3 ¼% 33	91.72	– .11	3.54	4.76
80.41	72.57	Tr 3 ¼% 44	73.49	– .22	4.42	5.66
100.00	85.76	Tr 3 ¾% 38	87.01	– .19	4.31	5.28
102.40	96.34	Tr 4 ½% 34	97.34	– .14	4.62	4.90
101.93	0.01	Tr 4 ½% 35	96.65	– .16	4.66	4.98
96.45	87.54	Tr 4 ½% 42	88.64	– .24	5.08	5.57
102.33	0.01	Tr 4 ¼% 32	98.01	– .10	4.34	4.64
100.56	94.70	Tr 4 ¼% 34	95.68	– .13	4.44	4.91
99.39	92.65	Tr 4 ¼% 36	93.79	– .17	4.53	5.08
100.00	88.42	Tr 4 ¼% 39	89.63	– .22	4.74	5.36
100.00	86.92	Tr 4 ¼% 40	88.24	– .22	4.82	5.44
90.97	81.54	Tr 4 ¼% 46	82.55	– .27	5.15	5.71
89.58	79.95	Tr 4 ¼% 49	80.78	– .30	5.26	5.76
101.49	97.47	Tr 4 ⅛% 31	98.16	– .09	4.20	4.58
100.70	95.57	Tr 4 ⅛% 33	96.41	– .13	4.28	4.77
104.72	100.54	Tr 4 ¾% 30	101.06	– .09	4.70	4.48
103.33	96.78	Tr 4 ¾% 35	97.82	– .18	4.86	5.05
102.00	93.84	Tr 4 ¾% 38	95.04	– .23	5.00	5.30
102.58	98.98	Tr 4 ⅜% 30	99.56	– .06	4.39	4.51
97.07	89.07	Tr 4 ⅜% 40	90.18	– .23	4.85	5.41
100.37	100.09	Tr 4 ⅝% 32	99.79	– .14	4.63	4.67
100.00	94.52	Tr 4 ⅝% 37	95.50	– .19	4.84	5.18
100.99	96.96	Tr 4 ⅞% 36	98.06	– .19	4.97	5.13
105.68	96.52	Tr 5 ¼% 41	97.84	– .25	5.37	5.47
105.44	93.20	Tr 5 ⅜% 56	93.99	– .35	5.72	5.80

Shorts (Under 5 Years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
91.87	89.09	Tr 0 ½% 29	91.18	– .03	0.55	4.33
98.67	91.49	Tr 0 ⅛% 28	94.46	– ...	0.13	4.10
99.46	96.16	Tr 0 ⅜% 26	99.42	+ .01	0.38	3.66
91.00	0.01	Tr 0 ⅞% 29	89.62	– .03	0.98	4.41
97.43	95.29	Tr 1 ¼% 27	97.36	– ...	1.28	4.22
95.46	92.89	Tr 1 ⅝% 28	94.47	– .01	1.72	4.31
101.17	98.03	Tr 4% 29	98.80	– .04	4.05	4.46
101.39	99.44	Tr 4 ¼% 27	99.97	– .03	4.25	4.27
101.88	98.28	Tr 4 ⅛ % 29	99.08	– .04	4.16	4.46
100.70	99.60	Tr 4 ⅛% 27	100.03	+ nc	4.12	4.01
101.65	99.40	Tr 4 ⅜% 28	100.03	– .02	4.37	4.36
107.15	103.38	Tr 6% 28	103.73	– .03	5.78	4.28

* maturities having an eight-month indexation lag.

This is a paid for information service. For further details on a particular fund, readers should contact their fund manager.

Data provided by ICE. Data as shown is for information purposes only. No offer is made by ICE or this publication

Business

Property crisis puts China at risk of missing key goal

Jack Barnett Economics Correspondent

A slew of new data has indicated that the Chinese economy is struggling with sluggish domestic demand and a continuing property crisis, putting the country at risk of missing its GDP growth target.

Retail sales rose by 0.6 per cent on an annual basis in July, down from an increase of 1 per cent in the previous month, dragged lower by a sharp fall in purchases of recreational products and cars, figures from China's National Bureau of Statistics showed. Analysts had forecast sales growth of 1.5 per cent in the month.

The data reinforced concerns that shoppers are reluctant to spend on unnecessary goods amid high youth unemployment, weak consumer confidence and uncertainty about whether and when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) will launch fresh fiscal support.

The worse-than-expected economic data led analysts to speculate that the China may be at risk of missing its minimum GDP growth target this year of 4.5 per cent. The International Monetary Fund said in July that it expected the Chinese economy to expand by 4.6 per cent across 2026 as a whole.

Pantheon Macroeconomics, the research consultancy, said: "Auto sales extended their decline at home, by contrast with robust shipments overseas. Potential buyers are waiting to see if the government will increase auto purchase subsidies as part of [second-half] growth support policies. China is stuck in the same storyline of vigorous manufacturing output, especially high-tech, but soft domestic demand."

Countries in the West have accused China of oversupplying goods to their markets, especially technology and automobiles, to counteract downbeat spending at home.

CCP officials at last month's politburo meeting signalled their intentions to provide consumers with more fiscal and monetary policy support, but did not specify what this would look like.

ING, the Dutch bank, said: "Markets may have been disappointed at a lack of tangible policy support for consumption after July's politburo meeting. While boosting consumption remains an important medium-term goal, we haven't seen too much in terms of stimulus to shore up near-term spending."

Investment in urban areas, including real estate and infrastructure, slid by 6.7 per cent in the year to July compared with the same period last year, worse than the 6 per cent that analysts expected.

Investment in property fell by nearly 20 per cent in the first half of the year. Industrial production climbed by 4.5 per cent in July, below the estimated 4.8 per cent rise and down from an increase of 5.3 per cent in June.

Urban unemployment jumped to 5.2 per cent from 5 per cent over the same period.

Prices for newly built homes in China dropped by 0.1 per cent in July, matching the decline registered in June. On an annual basis, prices fell by 3.2 per cent. Demand for property has been constrained by a real estate crisis dating back to 2020 which saw several of China's largest developers, including Evergrande, fall into bankruptcy.

Analysts also said that the world's second-largest economy suffered a temporary hit to activity owing to a typhoon that hit large areas in the south of the country in July.

Capital Economics, another research outfit, said: "The wider weakness partly reflects temporary disruptions from recent typhoons. We still expect a modest uptick in growth over the rest of the year, supported by fiscal loosening."

Pantheon said: "Policy support will probably be stepped up in late September or October, assuming domestic growth remains sluggish."

GETTY IMAGES

The harvest of prickly ash is well underway; when dried it will become Sichuan pepper. Boats head for the South China Sea

Energy shock from war in Iran proves a drag on Japan

Jack Barnett

Japan's economy grew much more slowly than expected in the second quarter of the year as businesses curbed investment amid rising energy prices caused by the Gulf conflict.

Figures published yesterday by the Japanese government showed that the economy grew by 1.1 per cent on an annualised basis in the three months to June, down from upwardly revised growth of 1.9 per cent in the previous three months. Analysts had projected GDP to increase by 2 per cent in the second quarter.

The softer-than-anticipated GDP growth figure was driven by a sharp drop of 4.6 per cent in Japanese investment spending, which analysts attributed to the energy shock.

Pantheon Macroeconomics, a research consultancy, said: "Perhaps the ongoing war in Iran and its impact on energy prices, rising input costs and uncertainty are making Japanese companies temporarily shelve their investment plans."

Japan is heavily exposed to the inflationary shock caused by the Middle East war because a large share of its oil imports are shipped through the Strait of Hormuz. Consumer spending was also a drag on overall growth, falling at an annualised rate of 0.3 per cent in the three months to June, a sharp slowdown from growth of 1.8 per cent in the first quarter.

The government is wrestling with a slide in the value of the yen. A joint intervention in foreign exchange markets with the US government to strengthen the yen this month has largely run out of steam, with the yen losing about half its initial appreciation since the intervention. Further depreciation of the yen is likely to boost Japanese inflation, weighing on household finances.

Takeshi Minami, chief economist at Norinchukin Research Institute, said: "Government subsidies have helped contain consumer inflation so far, but a weaker yen and higher crude oil import costs raise the likelihood of broader price hikes from the autumn onward."

The Bank of Japan is preparing to increase interest rates to counter persistent price pressures and rally the yen, but such a move would intensify pressure on consumers.

The International Monetary Fund expects the Japanese economy to grow by just 0.6 per cent this year.

AI boom exposes eurozone markets to 'worrisome' correction

Jack Barnett

Economists at the European Central Bank have warned that the investor frenzy around artificial intelligence will run out of steam, putting stock markets on course for a "worrisome" correction.

The group of experts at the EU's central bank said that "a sharp stock market correction would have severe consequences for the euro area" given that investors' capital in the common currency area is highly concentrated in US technology companies.

Mainly via purchasing shares in exchange-traded funds, eurozone households have an exposure equating to around €440 billion to the "Magnificent Seven", which consists of Nvidia, Microsoft, Apple, Alphabet, Amazon, Meta Platforms and Tesla. A fall in the share prices of these companies would hit the eurozone economy through two channels: a decline in household wealth tied to American equities and a decline in eurozone stock markets.

"Euro area and US stock markets have historically been very highly correlated, meaning that a US correction will not leave the euro area unaffected", the economists wrote in a blog post released yesterday.

Investors have grown increasingly sceptical about the potential for AI to transform the global economy and generate enough profit to justify capital expenditure and technology companies' sky-high equity valuations.

This scepticism in part drove the value of the Kospi, South Korea's benchmark equity index which is heavily geared towards AI-related companies, down by about 40 per cent from its June peak, burning retail investors who had piled into the market.

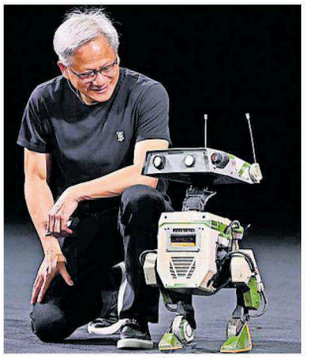
Koreans were keen to share in the astounding rise in the share prices of SK Hynix and Samsung Electronics, two of the world's foremost chip makers, mostly via newly introduced complex leveraged investment vehicles.

The blog post claimed that the frenzy surrounding AI resembled previous financial market bubbles, such as the British railway mania of the mid-1800s and the dotcom bubble in the 1990s.

In *The AI boom: rational enthusiasm or the next dotcom bubble?* the group wrote: "The current excitement surrounding AI has many historical precedents ... In each case, a genuinely transformative technology attracted investment, and the stock market valuations of firms that adopted it rose strongly before falling sharply."

They claimed that the potentially damaging effects to an economy multiplied as more individuals and businesses increased their AI usage.

When usage was contained to certain sectors, then "if [AI] fails, it's unfortunate for that company, but the rest of the economy is unaffected. The risk can be diversified away". But they added: "As adoption spreads, the same uncertainty becomes economy-wide. If something then goes wrong with that technology, the whole economy suffers. This risk cannot be diversified, so investors demand a higher risk premium."



Jensen Huang's Nvidia makes the specialised chips behind the AI boom

William Kay **Tempus**
Buy, sell or hold: today's best share tips

Two paths that lead to capital ideas

ICG

Market cap	Dividend yield
£5.7 billion	4.5 per cent

ICG ENTERPRISE TRUST

Market cap	Dividend yield
£905 million	3 per cent

Which is the better bet, the monkey or the organ grinder? That is the unusual choice offered by the asset manager ICG and its prize specimen, ICG Enterprise Trust. While the FTSE 100 ICG manages capital for institutional and super-wealthy private clients, the trust is in the FTSE 250 and offers less well-off investors a portfolio of unquoted equities.

ICG, formerly Intermediate Capital Group, was founded in 1989 by six investment professionals to cater for companies that needed capital to expand but did not want to issue more shares. The solution was the then-novel mezzanine capital, typically debt with an equity kicker, which was being imported from the US. After only five years, the firm listed on the London stock market and diversified into private credit, real estate, infrastructure and private equity for what are now 880 clients, including pension, sovereign and family office funds.

It runs its $126 billion of managed assets through a dozen funds, known as strategies, the latest worth €12 billion. It partners with other funds such as France's Amundi, the largest provider of ETF funds outside the US, which has taken a 9.9 per cent stake in ICG. From shareholders' point of view, one advantage of this system is that investors in the underlying funds cannot bail out unless ICG sells a fund's holdings or is wound up. This means that fee income is solid, predictable and not linked to underlying asset values.

In 2016, ICG bought the private equity fund investment business of Graphite Capital, a launch investor in ICG. An attraction was Graphite's listed investment trust, which it now manages as ICG Enterprise Trust. Its aim is to generate long-term compounding capital growth by investing in mid-market privately owned businesses in Europe and the US, giving smaller investors the direct chance to experience the ICG style. Unlike many investment trusts, it is comfortable owning a group of illiquid equities that might otherwise be out of reach. To achieve this, it focuses on mature buyouts and profitable, cash-generating companies, with an enterprise value of £250 million to £2 billion. ICG handles only 28 per cent of the trust's £1.3 billion portfolio by value, bringing in experienced international private equity managers for the rest.

Oliver Gardey, ICG's head of private equity investments, said: "That gives us a diversified portfolio of resilient companies with a more consistent return profile."

The trust's shares fell £2 to £13.10 in this spring's AI sell-off, although it has recovered since. The 12 per cent of its fund in software shares is mainly in cybersecurity, accounting, payroll, and compliance firms, which benefit at present from AI.

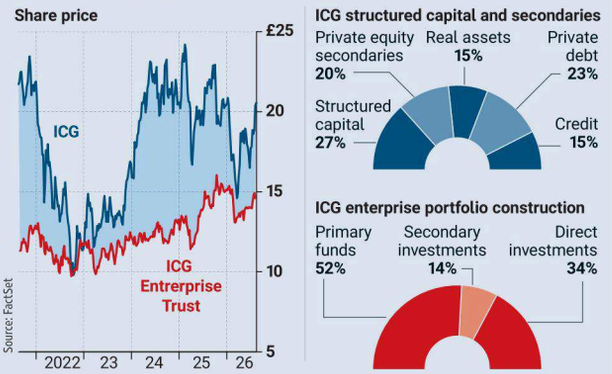
Most people will not have heard of the firms or funds in the trust's portfolio. Performance lately has been unspectacular. In the three months ending April 30, the portfolio return on a local currency basis was zero, and the net asset value per share total return was 0.1 per cent.

The two businesses, ICG and ICG Enterprise Trust, have very different risk profiles. Instinctively, investing in the trust's private equity funds seems riskier than investing in the parent's solid stream of management fees, even though the trust has a diverse range of funds. The flip side is that it should produce attractive returns if the investments do well. ICG has an enviable growth record, with clear visibility for a future trajectory of high cash generation.

ICG has increased dividends every year for the past 16 years from contractual fee revenue. As it raises larger private debt and equity funds, its revenues grow faster than operating costs.

ICG Enterprise Trust might be better for value-driven investors as the shares offer high-quality European and US private buyouts at a huge 30 per cent discount to net asset value. And who knows, that discount may narrow. The forecast 42p dividend for 2026-27 equates to a 3 per cent yield, significantly below ICG's 4.5 per cent.

Monkey or organ grinder?



ADVICE Buy both
WHY ICG's earnings are more predictable than the Enterprise Trust's, but a few winners — or losers — can have a bigger impact on the trust

Miners make effort to dig London out of hole

MARKET REPORT

The FTSE 100 started the week with the best of intentions: to end a run of six consecutive negative sessions (Robert Miller writes).

It was not to be, however, and by the close the main London index had shed a further 29.81 points, or 0.3 per cent, to 10,720.30, its lowest closing value since July 23. The heavyweight miners did their best on the back of firmer commodity prices but their gains were eclipsed by the size of the falls.

As the price of gold rose 1.1 per cent to $4,484 an ounce, **Endeavour Mining** was up 84p, or 2 per cent, at £41.95 while **Fresnillo** did its bit with a rise of 50p, or 1.7 per cent, to £29.30. It was the same for copper, which started strongly due to an acute near-term supply squeeze and falling global inventories, with **Anglo American**, the second biggest riser on the index, up 78p, or 2 per cent, at £39.28 and **Glencore** 4¼p, or 0.9 per cent, higher at 553¾p.

Also providing some uplift was **Rolls-Royce**, up 22¾p, or 1.5 per cent, at £15.64, boosted by Citigroup increasing its share price target to £16.47 although the US investment bank retained its "neutral" recommendation. With AI-related companies beginning to find favour again, after a sell-off due to the huge sums of money being spent to keep up with the technology, **Polar Capital Technology Trust**, which has a stake in Elon Musk's SpaceX, featured on the FTSE 100 leaderboard with a rise of 11p, or 1.6 per cent, to 686p.

The biggest fallers on the FTSE 100 were led by **Howden Joinery**, down 29p, or 3.5 per cent, to 798p over worries that higher energy commodity prices will put further pressures on high-volume manufacturers, which prompted Howdens to raise its estimated full-year inflation headwind to £40 million.

The supermarkets were also a drag, with **J Sainsbury**, down 11p, or 3.2 per cent, at 332½p, and **Tesco** 13¾p, or 3 per cent lower at 447¾p, ahead of today's Kantar Worldpanel UK grocery market share data.

The more UK-focused FTSE 250 failed to build on Friday's record close with a fall of 163.02 points, or 0.7 per cent, to 24,704.40. **Genuit** was the worst performer after last week's disappointing half-year results. Shares in the former Polypipe, a leader in ventilation, energy and water-saving products, fell 12p, or 4.2 per cent, to 271½p.

Wall Street report

An unexpected drop in retail sales hit Walmart and Home Depot ahead of their earnings reports this week which will be closely watched for signs of consumer strength. The weak economic data also prompted a drop on bets of a rate cut next month to just a 31 per cent chance, down from about 55 per cent a week ago. The S&P 500 shed 40.70 points, or 0.5 per cent, to 7,745.06, while the Nasdaq was down 84.25 points, or 0.3 per cent, to 26,644.91. The Dow Jones industrial average fell 272.63 points, or 0.5 per cent, to 53,459.78.

The day's biggest movers

Company	Change
Endeavour Mining	2.0%
Anglo American	2.0%
GSK	1.9%
Fresnillo	1.7%
Polar Capital Technology	1.6%
Croda International	-3.0%
Experian	-3.2%
J Sainsbury	-3.2%
Diageo	-3.4%
Howden Joinery	-3.5%

Polar Capital Technology Trust was lifted with the help of Elon Musk's SpaceX

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hoffman to leave Monzo

Gary Hoffman is to step down as chairman of Monzo next month after nearly eight years and will be replaced by Karen Peacock, one of the bank's non-executive directors, as the group seeks a successor.

The former Barclays banker was previously the chief executive of Northern Rock after it was bailed out by the government in 2008. At Monzo, Hoffman recruited Diana Layfield, a former Google and Standard Chartered executive, as the app-based bank's chief executive last year. He also brought in Rupert Keeley, a former PayPal executive, as UK chairman, as part of a board separation designed to support the group's growth.

Monzo was founded 11 years ago and its coral-coloured payment cards quickly became popular with younger customers. The group secured its full banking licence in 2017 and it now has 16 million customers.

Peacock said: "I will continue building on Gary and the team's work as Monzo focuses on delivering for our customers and on exciting growth opportunities in the UK and Europe."

Hoffman said: "I will leave with immense pride knowing my colleagues have created one of the UK's leading banks that brings together the best of technology and banking, living up to the original founders' dream of making money work for everyone."

£300m data centre push

Scotland's largest data centre operator has secured a state-backed £300 million debt facility to expand and build two sites at the "AI growth zone" in North Lanarkshire. Data Vita will expand capacity at its existing site, DVI, and construct another, DV3. The capacity for both sites is contracted to CoreWeave. The funding has been raised from a syndicate of lenders including ING, Santander and the Scottish National Investment Bank. The National Wealth Fund has agreed to guarantee up to £202 million of the package, the first time it has supported a project to boost domestic computing capacity.

Barclays moves at the top

Barclays has announced that it will appoint Mike Joo and Adeel Khan as co-chief executives of its investment bank. Joo is set to join the FTSE 100 lender early next year from Bank of America, where he has been working for 20 years, most recently as co-head of global investment banking. Khan will move into the role from his current job as head of global markets at Barclays, having held a series of top jobs at the bank since joining in 2008. Barclays' investment bank made a profit before tax of £1.7 billion in the first half of the year, up by 32 per cent on the same period in 2025.

Chips are up for Nvidia

Nvidia has agreed to provide a guarantee of up to $105 billion to help OpenAI lease a huge data centre in Ohio being developed by the SoftBank-owned SB Energy, in one of the chipmaker's largest infrastructure financing commitments. The chipmaker said it would also invest $1.5 billion in SB Energy, months after a $1 billion investment from OpenAI and SoftBank to expand data centre infrastructure. The latest example of Nvidia financing the infrastructure built around its chips, which helps to drive demand, has raised concerns about circular funding flows between the company and its customers.

Business

EQUITY PRICES

Dividend yields Please note dividend yields are supplied by ICE Data Services. The yield is the sum of a company's annual 12-month dividend payments divided by the last day's closing share price.
12-month high and low High/low prices for UK equities and investment trusts are based on intra-day figures.

Automobiles & Part

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
86¾	33¾	Aston Martin Lag	34⅜	-½	...	-0.7

Banking & Finance

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
265	177½	**Aberdeen Group**‡	244⅝	-¾	6.0	11.3
1¼	0⅝	Acuity RM♦	0⅝		...	-3.4
4006	2624	**Admiral**	3878	-54	3.7	15.7
662½	414⅜	AJ Bell	613	-5	2.4	23.9
28761⅛	22372¾	AON Corp	25843⅞	-516½	0.9	...
1130	765	Arbuthnot♦	830		6.6	7.6
276½	145⅞	Ashmore Group	227	-1	7.4	18.7
2126½	1550¾	Australia & NZ	1987⅞	-47⅞	5.7	19.5
736¼	590⅝	**Aviva**	730	+3⅜	5.5	27.1
1122	689	Banco Santander	1086	-14	1.5	14.0
554⅛	352⅞	**Barclays**‡	515⅞	-5⅛	2.2	11.8
17	4	Blue Star Capital♦	4¼		...	-2.2
710	613	BP Marsh & Ptnrs♦	676		5.4	5.1
363⅜	212	Bridgepoint Grp	328¼	-12¼	2.9	65.6
352	264⅝	Chesnara	332	-3½	6.8	-65.7
492	349	City of London Grp	484		6.8	16.4
556⅛	318⅜	Close Bros	431⅝	+3⅝	...	-6.5
753	203	CMC Markets	733	+31	1.9	26.7
2957⅝	2057	Deutsche Bank	2824½	-24	3.0	10.5
93	73¾	EFG-Hermes Hldgs	73¾		0.9	...
240¼	136	EPE Special Opps♦	211	+2	...	8.7
85	52	Fiske♦	67½		1.7	5.9
92	80	Foresight Ventures VCT	83		4.3	15.5
4700	2215	Georgia Capital	4420	-65	...	2.7
57	43¼	Hansard Global	54	+1	8.2	41.5
230	194	Helios U/W♦	223½		4.5	7.7
1904	1257⅛	**Hiscox**‡	1804	+9	2.2	13.5
1610	928⅛	**HSBC**‡	1531	+3¼	3.6	17.1
1956	1016	**IG Group**‡	1374	+11	3.1	9.5
204	90⅞	Impax Asset Mgmt♦	114⅜	-⅜	8.7	7.2
2340	1424⅞	**ICG**	2014	-46	4.3	12.1
145¾	115⅝	Intl Public P'ship‡	138	-1⅝	6.4	-8.7
690	499⅜	**Investec**	663½	-11	5.8	8.6
77⅝	60	Investment Co	76¼		...	...
75	48	IP Group	67½	-1¾	1.9	9.3
24	6½	Jarvis Securities♦	7¾		45.2	2.4
214½	113⅜	Jupiter Fund Mgmt‡	163⅜	+⅝	3.7	8.5
700	549	Lancashire Hldgs‡	598½	+1½	2.8	6.7
318⅛	217¼	**Legal & General**	302	-3	7.3	30.2
13620	6905	**Lion Finance Group**	13320	-190	2.4	9.4
385	223	Liontrust Asset Mgmt	310	-6	6.1	20.1
61	35	Livermore Invs Grp♦	37⅜		8.3	16.9
117⅞	77⅜	**Lloyds Banking**‡	114¾	-½	3.5	16.4
22	14	LMS Capital	15½		25.9	...
10140	6684	**London Stock Exchange**‡	8478	-58	1.9	35.6
367⅛	247	**M&G**	355¾	-⅛	5.8	28.2
327¼	154¼	Man Group‡	313⅝	-⅜	4.0	27.6
39¾	20	Manx Financial Grp♦‡	25	+½	2.1	4.6
10	1¼	Marechale Capital♦	4⅞	-½	...	-15.2
186⅜	98¼	Metro Bank	178⅜	-1¾	...	22.9
2621¼	1864⅝	National Australia	2070¾	-94¾	4.3	17.9
726	500¼	**NatWest Group**‡	709	+1¼	4.9	13.3
833⅞	438⅜	PayPoint	601	-7½	6.6	10.2
1238	910¼	**Prudential**	1034	+9	1.9	9.1
1¼	0⅜	Quantum Blockchain♦	0⅜		...	-1.8
209	150¾	Quilter	196¼	-2	3.3	22.1
2500	1580	Rathbones Group	1692	-18	5.9	15.7
325	245	Rockwood Strategic	318	-2½	...	0.0
2458½	1620	S & U	1985		5.8	10.2
3	0¼	Sancus Lending♦	1⅛		...	7.2
59⅛	42¼	Schroder REIT	45¼	-⅜	7.9	...
599½	358⅝	**Schroders**‡	583½	+½	3.8	17.1
1575½	1038¾	**St James's Place**‡	1179	-1	1.5	11.8
2278	1285	**Standard Chart'd**‡	2235	+16	2.3	15.5
948½	615	**Standard Life**	914	-13	6.1	-194.1
6347⅛	4254⅞	Sun Life Canada	5940⅛	-62⅝	3.4	...
6¾	2¾	Tavistock Invs♦	2⅞	-⅛	3.5	2.4
5200	3615	TBC Bank Grp‡	4900	-32	5.3	6.9
1¾	0¼	Tern♦	1¼	-⅛	...	-1.5
60	40⅛	Time Finance♦	57½	+5	...	9.1
0⅜	0⅛	Tooru♦	0¼		...	-1.9
4	1½	Truetide♦	3¼		...	-5.8
132	77⅛	Vanquis Banking Gp	79⅛	-¾	...	24.7
2800	2000	Volvere♦	2080	+60	...	11.0
7239⅝	5453⅛	Wells Fargo‡	6556	+¼	2.3	...
2275⅜	1781⅛	Westpac Bkg Corp	1840⅜	-11⅛	4.4	17.5
31¾	23	Worsley Investors	28⅜		...	...
57550	49947¼	Zurich Insurance	53960⅜	+40⅛	5.1	18.5

Construction & Property

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
365	181	Alumasc♦	230	+5	4.8	8.9
6⅝	4⅜	Aseana Properties	4¾		...	1.2
2½	1¼	Built Cybernetics♦	1⅝		...	-165.0
973	560½	Balfour Beatty	905½	-10	1.6	17.2
410¼	235⅜	**Barratt Redrow**	322¼	-4⅛	5.3	23.7
2890	1715	Bellway	2148	-34	3.4	16.2
4442	2796	Berkeley	3558	-64	...	10.7
1208	800½	Big Yellow Grp	895	-11	5.3	...
460	233	Billington Hldgs♦	407½	-7½	2.7	39.2
237	133½	Boot (Henry)	156		5.0	8.9
383¾	271⅜	Breedon	347⅜	-5	4.4	14.4
451⅝	318⅜	**British Land**	431¼	-6⅜	5.4	...
2900	2500	Cardiff Property	2750		1.1	20.7
2196	1469⅜	Derwent London	2058	-38	4.0	...
5½	4⅛	DCI Advisors♦	4⅝	-⅛	...	-2.7
19½	11	First Property♦	12½	-½	2.0	6.9
75	29	Fletcher King♦	42½		5.3	28.7
62	31¾	Foxtons Group‡	36¾	-⅛	3.2	8.5
637	407½	Galliford Try Hldgs	624	-1	3.2	18.5
391½	241	Genuit Group	271⅝	-12	4.7	14.9
435	221	Gleeson (MJ)	276	+1	4.0	10.2
1062¾	788⅝	Grafton Grp Units	1025	-23	3.7	14.6
205	149½	Grainger	174¼	-1⅞	4.8	6.4
377	270	Great Portland Est	350¾	-9⅝	2.3	0.0
391¾	263⅜	Hammerson	374	-7¼	4.9	...
184	116¾	Harworth Group	179⅝		1.0	61.9
400	215½	Heath (Samuel)♦	245		5.3	30.6
236¼	180⅝	Helical	205		1.3	42.4
147⅛	86¾	Ibstock	86¾	-2⅞	2.3	...
161½	112	James Halstead♦	132¾		6.7	13.7
3518	1238	Keller‡	3092	-16	2.6	15.3
8678⅛	8549⅞	Kingspan Group	8575⅝		0.6	27.1
726	522½	**Land Securities**	705	-7½	5.8	...
216¼	175¼	**LondonMetric Prop**	191⅛	-2⅞	6.5	...
25⅝	4¾	Macau Prop Opp Fd	6⅛		...	-0.4
195	124	Marshalls	165⅛	-5¼	4.2	29.0
106	66	Michelmersh Brick♦	74	-4	6.2	18.4
1	0⅜	Mindflair♦	0⅜		...	-1.2
5730	3915	Morgan Sindall	4518	-58	3.6	12.1
10200	8350	Mountview Estates‡	8800		6.0	16.9
85	65¾	NewRiver REIT	80¾	-1¼	8.3	...
234	160	Palace Capital	180½	-2½	8.3	40.1
320	261	Panther Securities♦	296		4.1	12.1
1552	947⅜	**Persimmon**	1167	-20	5.1	13.1
24	15	Plaza Centers	14½		...	-0.1
109⅝	87⅜	Primary Health Props	94⅞	-¾	7.7	...
33⅜	28	Real Estate Inv♦	30¾		4.9	-61.4
849½	578¾	Safestore	614½	-16	5.0	...
1142	791½	Savills	1062	-28	2.2	20.4
5½	0¼	Secure Prop Dev & Inv♦	0½		...	-0.1
997⅞	603	**Segro**‡	951¾	-9	3.3	...
155⅛	124⅛	Shaftesbury Capital	148⅜	-2⅜	2.9	7.9
12	6¾	SIG	8¾	+¼	...	-1.6
153	105	SigmaRoc♦	128¾	-1¾	...	17.7
113	86¾	Sirius Real Estate	95⅞	-¾	5.7	7.4
140	106	Smart (J)	112½		2.9	8.6
23¾	16	Steppe Cement♦	22		...	19.7
116⅞	74⅛	Taylor Wimpey	84½	-1½	4.9	30.2
139	104	Town Centre	129½		3.9	...
723½	493⅜	Travis Perkins	638½	-18	1.8	-7.7
175	132¼	**Tritax Big Box**‡	157¾	-3¼	5.2	...
745	442¼	Unite Group	520	-9½	7.2	...
746⅜	220	Vistry Group	273¾	-4¼	...	6.5
434⅜	312	Workspace Group	362⅝	-3⅜	7.2	...
930	730	Wynnstay Props♦	915		3.1	12.7

Consumer Goods

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
229	111½	AEP Plantations	180	-2	3.4	10.5
30	17⅝	Airea♦	26½		3.8	10.4
2359	1729½	**AB Foods**	2003	-49	3.1	14.1
715⅜	589	Barr (AG)	594	-10	3.1	14.1
5326	3677	**British Amer Tob**	4141	-73	5.9	11.8
1376½	976	**Burberry Group**	1050	-29½	...	...
181¼	85⅜	C&C Group	95¼	-1¼	5.2	...
5⅞	2¾	Capital Metals♦	4¼	+¼	...	-35.6
460	271	Churchill China♦	400	+5	5.2	10.1
5195	3270	**Coca-Cola HBC**	4538	-68	2.3	20.5
1515¾	821	Colefax♦	1450		0.4	10.3
5810	4775	Cranswick‡	5220	-40	2.2	17.6
2142	1295½	**Diageo**	1703½	-60½	2.2	29.6
0¼	0	Distil♦	0		...	-0.6
1918	1160	Evans (M.P.)♦	1680	-36	3.6	10.4
151½	114½	Fevara	141	+½	1.7	6.1
23540	14070	**Games Workshop**	18720	-390	3.1	30.0
2185⅜	1136⅞	Glanbia	1898⅛	-85	2.0	35.2
307½	191⅛	Greencore	259	-5⅜	1.0	19.6
79	4⅝	Headlam	8⅞	-⅞	...	-0.1
861	447⅞	Hilton Food	606½	-9	5.8	6.9
3632	2568	**Imperial Brands**	2568	-41	6.5	10.2
7646⅜	5567¾	Kerry Group	7113½	+36	1.7	20.8
170	106¼	McBride	161	-1⅝	1.9	8.3
236	85	Mulberry Group♦	231	+11	...	-17.8
1275	880	Nichols♦‡	1090	-20	3.6	18.6
374	252	Norcros	324	-2	3.5	...
381⅛	309	Origin Ents♦	367		4.0	8.7
1	0¼	PACSCo♦	0⅜		...	-0.0
138	47⅛	Portmeirion♦	50½		...	-1.1
1½	0½	Provexis♦	1⅛		...	-56.2
114	65⅛	PZ Cussons	101¾	-2⅜	3.6	21.7
138	92	REA	107		...	-207.2
210	155	Tandem♦	186	-4	1.6	12.0
330	220	The Character Grp♦	315		2.2	-46.7
10	5	Ukrproduct Grp♦	7½	+¼	...	-17.3
5542⅛	3644	**Unilever**‡	4512½	-77	3.7	12.2
82¼	19½	Victoria♦	55⅞	+¼	...	-0.2

Engineering

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
59⅛	10	Assoc Brit Eng	20		...	-6.9
2180	1458	Avon Technologies‡	1926	-22	1.0	74.8
1527	902⅜	**Babcock**‡	1177	-16½	0.6	28.0
2360	1529	**BAE Systems**	2236	-22	1.7	32.5
1500	500	Braime A N/V♦	1200		1.4	6.4
2440	1376	Braime Group♦	2350		0.7	12.5
550	350	Caffyns	400		2.5	-9.8
0½	0⅛	Cap XX Ld♦	0⅛		...	-3.6
340	202¼	Castings‡	318	+8	5.8	18.3
27	12⅜	Checkit♦	21		...	-8.1
650¾	446½	Chemring Group‡	618½	-9½	1.3	34.7
55	28⅛	Chesterfield Spec Cyl♦	34½		...	-38.3
1538	881⅛	Cohort♦	1382	-52	1.3	26.5
570	184	Dialight	546	+26	...	...
15	5¾	Feedback♦	6⅛		...	-0.2
1270	463⅛	Gooch & Housego♦	1210		1.1	88.3
28500	9292⅝	Goodwin	19620	+40	1.4	60.0
4902	3194	**Halma**	3702	+16	0.7	37.6
3220	1994	Hill & Smith	3040	+110	...	29.6
2¾	1	Image Scan♦	2⅝		...	-12.4
3166	2216	**IMI**‡	3084	+12	1.1	24.8
7000	3480	Judges Sci.♦	3900	-100	2.9	47.2
90	34	LPA♦	82½		...	-31.2
685	409⅞	**Melrose**‡	493¼	-1	1.5	17.0
261	179¾	Morgan Advanced	247½	-2½	4.9	33.0
405	200	Mpac♦	330		...	-10.4
1800	1120	MS Intl♦	1610	+20	1.6	23.9
3318	1682	Oxford Instruments‡	2950	+34	0.8	34.9
2413⅜	1779⅛	Phillips Elec	2008⅜	-16⅝	3.6	-47.0
4⅛	1	PipeHawk♦	2⅛		...	-3.0
5490	2930	Renishaw	5300	+125	1.5	46.0
1586	990	**Rolls-Royce**‡	1563¾	+22¾	0.7	22.5
489¼	286⅜	Rotork‡	484¾	+⅜	1.7	35.1
105	60	SDI Group♦	89	-½	...	18.9
318⅛	161	Senior	292½	-½	0.7	-286.8
2072¾	2037	SKF Group	2066⅛		2.9	30.8
2754⅛	2088	**Smiths**	2638	+25	1.8	30.8
215	135	Solid State♦	182½		1.5	25.3
249	170	Somero Enter♦	235	+5	3.2	16.8
8050	5950	**Spirax Group**	7020		2.4	31.7
7½	3½	Tanfield♦	4½		...	-4.4
320	240	Thorpe FW♦	256	-1	2.8	11.8
142¾	47	Transense Tech♦	47½		...	5.1
507½	350	Vesuvius	393¼	-2¼	6.0	18.6
710	325	Volex‡	562	+8	0.9	21.6
3580	2254	**Weir**	2672	+10	1.6	27.9
2060	843	XP Power	1846	+104	...	-44.0

Health

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
284½	187	Advanced Medical♦	281		1.0	60.8
12⅛	5	Allergy Therapeutics♦	5¼		...	-6.2
8	0⅞	CelLBxHealth♦	1⅜		...	-0.2
580	387½	Anpario♦	520	-5	2.4	12.9
15732	9892	**AstraZeneca**‡	11560	+100	2.1	23.7
3⅝	1⅝	Cambridge Nutri Sci♦	1⅞		...	2.7
259¼	193	**Convatec**	232	+2⅜	2.4	36.6
34	20	Potter & Moore♦‡	23½		2.3	7.7
116⅞	72	Eco Animal Health♦	101		...	31.0
32	21¾	EKF Diagnostics♦	24⅞	-⅜	...	53.0
10½	0¼	Futura Medical♦	0½		...	-0.2
3228¾	1943	Genus	2260	+4	1.5	77.1
2282	1288⅝	**GSK**‡	1851½	+34	3.8	13.1
0¼	0⅛	Gunsynd♦	0⅛		...	-2.0
416⅛	274⅜	**Haleon**‡	350¼	-5⅜	2.1	18.8
1865	1187	Hikma Pharma‡	1639	-1	3.9	12.2
266	150½	Hutchmed China♦	190	+5	...	4.9
19⅜	1½	ImmuPharma♦	3¾	-¾	...	-10.0
32	12¼	Inspiration Health♦	18½		...	-15.9
15	6¼	IXICO♦	7½		...	-4.1
1	0⅜	Thalia Therapeutics♦	0⅝		...	-3.9
77⅝	53⅞	NIOX Group♦	67⅜	-¼	2.3	39.9
CHF131.50	96.03	Novartis	CHF123.40	+0.96	3.0	40.2
962	441	Oxford Biomedica	493	+6	...	-18.3
0¾	0¼	Physiomics♦	0½		...	-2.6
4⅜	1¼	Proteome Sciences♦	1¾		...	-1.7
6522⅞	3664	**Reckitt Benck**‡	5026	-88	4.3	10.7
28⅞	10⅜	RUA Life Sci♦	26	-½	...	-111.6
29	9½	Sareum Holdings♦	28	+1½	...	-11.7
1441½	1050	**Smith & Neph**	1088	-8	2.7	20.5
256½	140¾	Spire Healthcare	234½	+½	0.6	57.2
14	5	Talisman Metals♦	5¾	-½	...	1.6
0⅞	0⅛	ValiRx♦	0⅛		...	-0.3

Industrials

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
79⅞	58⅛	Accsys Tech♦	73¾	+3¼	...	32.3
4780½	3665⅛	BASF	4306⅝	-43⅜	4.5	27.7
4606¾	2268½	Bayer	4101	+8¼	0.2	-13.0
98⅛	73⅛	Coats Group	83⅛	-1	3.0	19.1
3352	2437	**Croda**	3160	-98	3.5	71.2
460	230	Cropper (James)♦	445		...	14.4
195⅜	136	Elementis‡	179¾	-2⅝	1.9	-31.2
110	6¼	Hardide♦	82	-2	...	...
3775	2095	International Paper‡	2945	-55	4.6	-7.4
2300½	2224	Johnson Matthey‡	2300		4.5	-30.2
1083	660	Mondi	869⅝	-12⅜	1.4	27.2
169⅞	110	Robinson♦	135	+2½	4.4	9.9
997⅛	597	Swire Pacific	965⅞	+9⅜	3.9	47.3
12	5½	Symphony Enviro♦	8		...	-7.4
124	16¾	Synthomer	99	-2¼	...	-1.0
2858¼	2026⅝	Takeda Pharma	2553⅝	-50¼	3.7	-57.0
831	515	Victrex	812	+4	7.3	25.4
430	320	Wynnstay♦	372½		4.8	37.7
479⅞	318½	Zotefoams	448½	+3	1.8	9.7

Leisure

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
451	231	Accesso Tech♦	300	+½	...	14.5
260	160	Celtic♦	208	+5	...	5.8
221⅝	164	Domino's Pizza‡	192¾	-4⅞	5.9	12.8
915⅝	500⅜	**Entain**	556⅝	-⅝	3.6	-5.3
63¼	19¾	Evoke	46⅛	-⅛	...	-0.4
52	29	Gaming Realms♦	30¼	-⅜	...	14.9
310	210	Heavitree♦	300		2.2	5.5
244	130	Heavitree A♦	205	-20	3.2	3.8
$175.70	116.00	**InterCont'l Hotels**	$159.90	+1.05	1.2	32.6
301½	223½	Mitch & Butlers	277	-6½	...	9.3
297	129⅜	On The Beach	192¾	-4⅝	2.1	35.1
144¾	86	Rank Group	106⅜	+1	3.3	16.6
219⅜	137¼	SSP	204⅝	-7⅜	2.2	-22.0
0⅝	0¼	Bow Street Group♦	0⅜		...	-0.3
840	530½	Wetherspoon JD	802	-14	1.5	13.4
3302	2098	**Whitbread**	2437	-43	4.0	19.8

Media

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
76⅛	51⅛	Aeorema Comms♦	64½		4.1	51.2
29	18	Altitude Group♦	24		...	-96.0
115	70¼	Arcontech Group♦	79½		5.0	11.3
831¼	418⅝	**Autotrader**	525¾	-13¾	2.2	15.4
690	435	Bloomsbury Pub‡	651	-13	2.5	19.7
3½		Caledonian Hldgs♦	1¼		...	-0.1
60	40	Catalyst Media♦	42½		...	23.1
0⅝	0⅛	Catenai♦	0⅛		...	-3.0
21	9	Ebiquity♦	9⅜		...	-0.9
785½	262¼	Future	319¾	-17⅝	5.3	5.1
154	60⅝	GlobalData	84	+⅜	1.8	19.1
110	44	IG Design Group♦	96	+2	1.0	-0.8
1000	719	**Informa**‡	903	-22¾	2.5	...
87⅜	65¾	ITV	71	-½	7.0	12.0
215½	98½	ME Group	118¾		7.1	7.9
0⅛	0⅛	Mediazest♦	0⅛		...	14.7
27	12	Mission Group♦	22	+1	...	-1.0
220¼	139¾	Mony Group‡	203⅝	-4⅝	6.2	13.3
2341⅜	1624⅜	News Corp A	2116⅝	-22¾	0.7	...
2606⅞	1891½	News Corp B	2415	-29½	0.6	...
439½	217	Next 15 Group♦	328	-13½	4.7	-10.9
1337	874¾	**Pearson**‡	1197		2.1	23.3
4½	3	Primorus Inv♦	3⅜		...	5.0
75⅜	40⅛	Reach‡	42⅛	-⅝	14.0	-1.0
59	40	React♦	42½	+1½	...	-29.3
3634	1991	**Relx**‡	2470	-56	2.8	21.9
782⅝	391⅜	Rightmove	504¼	-6¾	2.1	17.9
270	130	SpaceandPeople♦	136		...	6.3
130	95⅝	STV Group	108		...	-10.0
450	170½	System1 Group♦	325		1.8	31.2
5144½	5048¾	21st Cent Fox A	5096⅝		0.8	...
3351⅝	3300¼	21st Cent Fox B	3351⅝		1.3	...
369	230	Wilmington	284	+6	4.1	22.1
412⅝	218½	WPP	385⅛	-13⅞	3.9	7.7
71½	40	Zinc Media♦	57½		...	-5.6

Natural Resources

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
0⅛	0	ADM Energy‡	0		...	1.2
17⅞	8⅛	H-Power♦	10⅝	-¼	...	-4.4
89⅜	36¾	Afentra♦	71¾	+¾	...	-69.5
0	0	Arkadian Strat Metals♦	0		...	-1.0
0¼	0⅛	Alien Metals♦	0⅛		...	-15.0
2⅞	1	Aminex	1⅛	-⅛	...	-13.2
8924	3349⅞	Anglo Amer Plat	6650½	+167⅛	6.9	24.8
4239	2123	**Anglo Amer**	3928	+78	0.7	-16.1
435	155	Anglo Asian Mng♦‡	405	-2½	0.7	35.4
4475	2077	**Antofagasta**	3616	+31	1.6	36.4
1¼	0⅜	Arc Minerals♦	0¾	+⅛	...	-1.5
2⅜	1¼	Ariana Resources♦	1½		...	-155.0
0⅞	0¼	Arkle Resources♦	0¾		...	-11.0
2¼	0⅞	Asiamet Resources♦	1½		...	-13.1
1094	481½	Atalaya Mine	925	+8	1.1	17.8
4¾	2½	Beacon Energy♦	2⅞		...	-0.7
13	4	Beowulf Mining♦	10½	+½	...	-3.1

PRICES

Major indices

New York	
Dow Jones	53459.78 (-272.63)
Nasdaq	26644.91 (-84.25)
S&P 500	7745.06 (-40.70)
Tokyo	
Nikkei 225	69220.25 (+506.45)
Hong Kong	
Hang Seng	25453.23 (+336.38)
Amsterdam	
Amsterdam AEX	1114.80 (-3.02)
Sydney	
Australia AO	9279.00 (-34.20)
Frankfurt	
DAX	26338.61 (-101.70)
Singapore	
Singapore Straits	5768.46 (+24.87)
Brussels	
Brussels BEL20	5762.49 (+98.01)

Paris	
Paris CAC	8579.60 (-57.20)
Zurich	
Zurich SMI	14302.39 (-88.28)
Zurich DJ Euro Stoxx 50	6530.45 (-9.14)
London	
FTSE100	10720.30 (-29.81)
FTSE250	24704.40 (-163.02)
FTSE350	5849.95 (-18.73)
FTSE Eurotop 100	5078.82 (-3.91)
FTSE All Share	5786.82 (-18.40)
FTSE Non Financials	6298.74 (-26.93)
TechMark Focus	9643.59 (+26.36)
US$	1.3553 (+0.0004)
Euro	1.1696 (-0.0003)
SDR	0.9905 (+0.0002)
CPI Jun (2015=100)	142.5
RPI Jun (1987=100)	416.5
RPIX Jun (1987=100)	409.7

London Financial Futures

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol	Open Int
Long Gilt	26-Sep	86.51	86.73	86.19	86.3	154069	1321985
	26-Dec	86.47	86.6	86.17	86.25	971	2463
	27-Mar				86.17	0	
3-Mth Sonia Index	26-Jun	96.2525	96.2525	96.2525	96.2525	8971	390881
	26-Sep	96.15	96.16	96.135	96.14	72603	428709
	26-Dec	95.93	95.955	95.91	95.925	79322	543316
	27-Mar	95.78	95.805	95.755	95.765	57009	389609
3 Mth Sonia Index	27-Jun	95.695	95.735	95.675	95.69	56947	391920
	27-Sep	95.68	95.72	95.655	95.67	49846	244704
	27-Dec	95.685	95.735	95.67	95.685	48673	289818
3-Mth Euribor	26-Sep	97.4	97.41	97.395	97.4	81195	624494
	26-Dec	97.235	97.25	97.23	97.24	131814	942369
	27-Mar	97.125	97.145	97.12	97.135	93700	482342
	27-Jun	97.075	97.1	97.07	97.085	99056	485967
	27-Sep	97.07	97.095	97.065	97.08	70700	440790
3-Mth Saron Index	26-Jun	100.045	100.0475	100.045	100.0475	1029	70653
	26-Sep	100.045	100.045	100.04	100.04	356	78994
	26-Dec	99.995	100	99.99	99.995	1293	55161
	27-Mar	99.895	99.905	99.895	99.9	1219	37152
	27-Jun	99.81	99.825	99.81	99.81	1461	24274
	27-Sep	99.745	99.76	99.74	99.745	691	25692
	27-Dec	99.695	99.71	99.69	99.695	352	20143
FTSE100	26-Sep	10786	10825	10738.5	10753.5	45927	482513
	26-Dec	10856	10863	10821	10821.5	655	1302
FTSEurofirst 80	26-Sep				8927.3	0	
	26-Dec				8974.1	0	

Tradeweb

© 2021 Tradeweb Markets LLC. All rights reserved.re-distributed; The Tradeweb FTSE Gilt Closing Prices information contained herein is proprietary to Tradeweb; may not be copied or is not warranted to be accurate, complete or timely; and does not constitute investment advice. Tradeweb is not responsible for any loss or damage that might result from the use of this information.

Commodities

Natural Gas $

2.686	-0.047

Light Crude Oil

82.75	+0.35

Crude Oils ($/barrel FOB)

WTI SEP 26	82.75	0.35
WTI OCT 26	82	0.53
WTI NOV 26	80.81	0.71
WTI DEC 26	79.26	0.77
WTI JAN 27	77.69	0.64

Products

Fuel Oil	488.338	7.807
Euro Naphtha	741.724	14.867

ICE Futures

Gas Oil

Sep1273.75-1273.25	Jan1065.25-1064.75
Oct1220.5-1220	Feb1035-1034.75
Nov1162-1161.5	
Dec1104.25-1103.75	Volume: 167626

Brent

Oct 89.09-89.07	Jan83.56-83.54
Nov87.26-87.24	Feb82.21-82.18
Dec 85.25-85.23	Volume: 574087

Cocoa

Sep 4294 +170	Sep4434 +180
Dec 4349 +179	Dec4367 +168
Mar 4479 +196	Mar4473 +196
May 4476 +186	May4481 +186
Jul 4475 +184	Volume: 32818

Robusta Coffee

Sep 3710 +89	May 3619 +84
Nov 3689 +95	Jul 3555 +36
Jan 3669 +93	
May 3619 +84	Volume: 30649

White Sugar

Oct524.1 +12.9	Aug509.9 +7.2
Dec520.2 +10.7	Oct503.2 +5.8
May 518.5 +8.3	
May 518.5 +8.3	Volume: 32581

London Grain Futures

LIFFE Wheat (close £/t)

Nov 202.5 -0.5	May207 -2.75
Jan 205.25	Jul 212
Mar 207.5	Volume: 8877

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
0⅛	0	Bezant Resources♦	0⅛		...	12.5
3495	1918	BHP Group	3243	+ 37	3.2	24.7
14	7⅝	Border & Sthn Pet♦	10¼	- ¼	...	-86.4
122½	8⅜	Bougainville	8⅞	- ¼	...	-13.4
609⅜	399⅜	**BP**‡	519⅝	- 3¼	4.8	...
0	0	Buccaneer Energy♦	0		...	-0.6
8¼	1¾	Cadence Minerals♦	5⅝	+ 1	...	-10.7
5½	3	Cadogan Energy	3¾		...	-11.3
2900	1250	Caledonia Mining♦	1750	+ 45	2.4	8.4
3⅜	1¾	Caspian Sunrise#	1⅞		...	3.5
244	125¼	Cent Asia Metals♦	149	+ 3¾	8.1	-4.7
2¼	1⅛	Chariot Ltd♦	1½		...	...
0	0	Clontarf Energy♦	0		...	-6.2
0½	0¼	Corcel♦	0⅜		...	-2.2
18½	8	Crism Therapeutics♦	10¾		...	-2.1
300½	108⅛	DRD Gold	183½	+ 2¾	2.2	15.5
0½	0⅛	ECR Minerals♦	0¼		...	-3.1
0⅛	0	Empyrean Energy♦	0		...	-0.4
5620	2410	**Endeavour**	4195	+ 84	3.1	20.3
28	9¾	EnQuest	24½	- ⅛	3.3	...
6	2	Eurasia Mining♦	2¼		...	15.3
2⅜	0⅝	Europa Oil & Gas♦	1⅞		...	-9.5
87¼	27¼	Ferrexpo#	28⅝		...	-4.6
4472	1617	**Fresnillo**‡	2930	+ 50	3.8	21.1
80	3	Galantas Gold♦	23½	- ½	...	-6.4
12½	2⅞	GCM Resources♦	9⅜	+ 5½	...	-13.4
7½	2½	Gem Diamonds	4	+ ⅛	...	-0.1
3½	1⅝	Getech♦	3¼		...	-7.9
707¼	281⅞	**Glencore**	553¾	+ 4⅞	2.3	...
0½	0⅛	Geo Exploration♦	0⅛		...	-4.3
4582¾	2310¼	Gold Fields	3074¼	+ 113⅛	3.8	...
21	6½	Goldplat♦	18		2.9	30.0
2	0¼	Goldstone Res♦	0⅝		...	-0.9
800	247	Greatland Resources♦	665½	+ 22	...	19.9
353¾	176	Griffin Mining♦	269	- 2	...	30.1
235	160⅝	Gulf Keystone	177⅜	- 2⅜	7.2	34.5
858	246¼	Hochschild	526	+ 16½	0.8	18.3
553	294	Hunting	491	+ 3	2.0	25.4
0⅛	0	Ironveld♦	0		...	-2.2
219¾	57⅞	ITM Power♦	107¼	- 2⅛	...	-14.5
5¼	2¼	Jubilee Metals♦	2¾		...	-3.7
1⅛	0⅜	Karel Diamond Res♦	0¾		...	-4.2
2⅛	0½	KEFI Gold and Copper♦	1¼		...	-10.9
345	178⅜	Kenmare Res	195	- 6	...	-0.7
5⅞	1¾	Landore Res♦	1¾		...	-1.8
0⅛	0⅛	Lansdowne Resources♦	0⅛		...	-1.3
4⅞	2⅝	Lexington Gold♦	2⅞	+ ⅛	...	-29.7
19¼	10¼	Metals Exploration♦	14		...	18.1
0¾	0⅛	Nativo Resources♦	0⅛		...	-0.1
4½	1	Nostrum Oil & Gas	2½	- 1½	...	-0.0
0⅝	0⅛	Oriole Resources♦	0⅜		...	-15.8
		Ormonde Mining			...	...
41	11½	Orosur Mining♦	16¾	- ⅜	...	...
190⅜	59¾	Pan African Res	112¼	+ 3¾	1.9	21.3
33¼	6¾	Pantheon Res♦	13¾		...	-48.9
27	12½	Parkmead Group♦	20½		...	3.1
22⅝	5¾	Petra Diamonds	5⅞	- ⅛	...	-0.2
1⅛	0½	Petrel Resources♦	0⅞		...	-4.0
1⅝	0⅝	Petro Matad♦	1		...	-4.6
8½	2¾	Plexus Holdings♦	3⅝		...	-1.4
938	672	Porvair‡	868	- 10	0.8	22.1
5⅛	2⅛	Prospex Energy♦	3½		...	-5.2
5	0⅞	Quadrise♦	1	- ⅛	...	-5.9
160	35	Reabold Resources♦	62½		...	-781.2
0	0	Red Rock Res♦	0		...	-0.3
10416¼	5324⅛	Rio Tinto Ltd‡	8833½	+ 60⅞	3.9	16.8
9117	4436½	**Rio Tinto**‡	7126	+ 67	4.8	15.7
0½	0⅛	Rome Resources♦	0⅜		...	-15.4
375	184¼	Serabi Gold♦	310	+ 10	1.6	5.9
302⅜	146	Serica Energy♦	243	- 4¾	6.6	-25.3
3758½	2553¾	**Shell**‡	3329½	+ 9½	4.5	14.9
7	2¼	Shuka Minerals♦	3		...	-2.2
13	1½	Sound Energy♦	1¾		...	-1.6
27	5½	Star Energy♦	21	- 2	...	-3.8
4½	0⅞	Sunda Energy♦	2¼	- ⅛	...	-2.2
0	0	Sunrise Resources♦	0		...	-3.0
0		Synergia Energy♦	0		...	0.5
0⅛	0	Tertiary Minerals♦	0⅛		...	-7.5
0⅞	0½	Thor Energy♦	0½		...	-0.6
7066	4293½	Total Eng SE	6492	+ 14½	4.6	12.8
0	0	Tower Resources♦	0		...	-0.4
19½	3½	Tullow Oil	15⅞	+ 1⅛	...	53.7
0	0	UK Oil & Gas♦	0		...	-0.2
13	2⅝	URU Metals♦	4		...	-2.7
0⅜	0⅛	Vast Resources#	0⅛		...	-0.5
9	1⅜	Westmount Energy♦	3⅛		...	-8.3
1½	0½	Xtract Resources♦	1¼		...	-5.4
4⅜	2¼	Zephyr Energy♦	3⅛		...	-7.2

Professional & Support Services

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
5135	2980	4imprint‡	4580	- 136	3.9	15.3
615	464	Andrews Sykes♦	597½		4.3	13.8
130	103½	BTG Consulting♦	108	+ 1	4.3	20.4
2886	1981	**Bunzl**	2752	- 6	2.7	19.5
416	215	Capita	291½	+ 18½	...	-2.0
49⅞	25	CEPS♦	40		...	-11.4
165	90	Christie Group♦	152½		2.3	30.0
2581⅛	2000	**Compass**	2328¾	- 37⅝	2.2	28.7
87	64½	Croma Security♦	70		3.4	12.2
6740	4188	**DCC Energy**	6360		3.4	...
35	15	Diales Grp♦	34		4.4	26.2
7765	4970	**Diploma**	7355	- 15	0.9	53.3
840	505	DiscoverIE	810	+ 1	1.6	26.8
115¼	78⅜	Essentra	106⅝	+ ⅜	2.0	...
3987	2203	**Experian**	2799	- 91	1.9	23.1
330	110	FIH Group♦	140	- 5	4.8	-3.4
850	588	Hargreaves Servs♦	804	- 6	5.0	8.6
5855	3519⅜	**Intertek**	5855	+ 15	2.8	26.8
250¾	163½	Int'l Workplace	176⅝	- 1¾	0.6	...
172⅛	123¾	Johnson Service	144⅛	- 3	3.3	15.5
554	360	Journeo♦	505		...	20.8
263⅝	178⅝	Kier Group	258	- 3¾	3.0	20.2
1170	910	Latham (J)♦‡	1035	- 5	3.5	11.2
3800	2100	London Security♦	3650		2.7	18.8
298	204	LSL Property Servs	273	+ 5	4.2	16.4
99	59¾	Macfarlane	72	- ⅜	5.1	18.0
189⅞	64½	Maintel Holdings♦	68½		...	-5.8
28	15¼	Malvern Intl♦	20½		...	-2.7
460	310	Mears Group	428	- 3	4.2	7.7
268⅝	101¼	Michael Page	206¼	+ ¾	2.3	71.1
214	134¾	Mitie Group‡	208		2.2	31.5
15¾	0¾	MobilityOne#	6¾		...	-2.1
137	71⅛	Newmark Security♦	110		...	15.6
260	170	Norman Broadbent♦	187½		...	5.9
158	84⅞	Northern Bear♦	130½		5.7	4.3
187½	110	NWF Group♦	150½		5.8	8.1
66	42	PCI-PAL♦	62½	+ ½	...	...
12½	7	Petards♦	10¼	+ ½	...	-15.3
12⅞	7	PHSC♦	7¾		...	-2.6
0¾	0⅛	PowerHouse Energy♦	0¼		...	-3.1
64	41⅜	Record	43⅞	- ¼	8.2	11.2
978	772	Renew Holdings♦	917	- 9	2.2	14.9
507	329⅝	**Rentokil**‡	347¼	- 3¾	2.7	25.3
310	222	Restore♦	298	- 1½	2.4	-63.4
7	1½	River Global A♦‡	2½		...	-0.3
30	14	Roebuck Food Group♦	26		...	-9.0
752½	536⅞	RS Group	728½	- 9	3.1	21.1
150	85	RTC Group♦	95	+ 5	7.1	6.7
123⅞	68	RWS Holdings♦	120	- ¼	5.3	-4.4
612	520	Science Group♦	576	- 1	1.7	7.7
325¾	212¾	Serco	264¼	- 4⅜	1.8	18.4
79⅜	54	Smiths News	69¾	- ¼	8.0	6.0
29	13¼	Software Circel♦	16½		...	-78.6
52½	36⅝	Staffline Group♦	43¾	- ¼	...	11.2
300½	132¼	SThree	296½	+ 6	4.8	21.6
350	146	Synectics♦	207½	+ 7½	2.4	9.4
2	0½	Thruvision Group♦	1⅜		...	-1.3
74	46	Tribal♦	61	- 1	2.1	14.5
82½	58	Vianet♦	66	- ½	3.6	46.2
490	294½	ZIGUP	474	- 3½	5.7	14.1

Retailing

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
117⅞	82½	AO World	94⅜	- 1⅞	...	14.8
269¼	140	B&M European	229	- 4⅜	4.2	14.0
115¾	58¼	Card Factory	74½	- ¾	6.7	8.3
1648	1062	CVS Group	1296	- 11	0.7	17.6
204	113	DFS Furniture	158½	- 1½	0.6	15.1
1248	707	Dunelm	868½	- 23	8.1	11.2
840	598	Frasers Group	794½	- 20	...	9.2
2046	1407¼	Greggs	1798	- 24	3.8	15.0
250	123¾	Halfords‡	231	- 6½	3.9	15.2
981	713	**Howden Joinery**	798	- 29	2.8	16.2
895	640½	Inchcape‡	816	- 9½	4.1	11.3
1⅜	0⅜	Imaging Biometrics	0¾		...	-4.1
106⅛	64	**JD Sports**	90	- 2⅜	1.3	10.4
372¼	240¼	**Kingfisher**	322	- 4⅞	3.9	23.0
418⅜	301⅛	**Marks & Spencer**	381⅝	- 1⅞	1.1	30.0
3⅞	0⅝	Mothercare♦	0⅞	+ ⅛	...	-0.9
93¼	61¾	Naked Wines♦	71	- ¾	...	-7.7
15900	11200	**Next**	15045	- 210	1.8	19.8
376	140½	Ocado	234¾	- 9⅜	...	5.0
241⅝	167½	Pets at Home	210⅜	- 4⅝	3.5	15.2
575	200	Pinewood Tech Group	427	- 3½	...	89.0
747	184	Saga	675	- 16	...	...
380¼	292¼	**Sainsbury's**	332⅝	- 11⅛	4.1	19.2
1120	378⅝	WH Smith	420	- 9¼	...	-3.8
14	4½	Sosandar♦	12¾		...	91.1
510⅜	411⅝	**Tesco**	447¾	- 13¾	3.2	16.3
50	30¼	Topps Tiles	35⅛	- ⅜	8.8	11.5

Technology

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
252	140⅜	Alfa Financial	164¾	- 1¾	5.8	16.2
307	195	Aptitude Software	218	- 1	2.5	29.9
129	55	Bango♦	62½		...	-8.6
20	12	BATM Adv Coms	12¼	- ¼	...	-3.9
33	19⅞	Berkeley Res	26	+ ½	...	-67.9
3¼	1¼	Blackbird♦	1⅜		...	-2.3
194	74	Celebrus Tech♦‡	97	- 4	3.5	-108.6
28	12½	Cirata♦	13⅜	- ⅜	...	-3.0
0⅜	0⅛	CloudCoCo♦	0⅛		...	0.4
5090	2234	**Computacenter**	5000	- 10	1.5	34.1
286	173½	Concurrent Tech♦	242½	- 7½	0.5	41.4
13½	6½	Corero♦	7¼	- ⅜	...	-98.3
2644	988	Craneware♦	1264	- 20	2.7	30.5
110	50	Crimson Tide♦	87½		...	20.8
9⅞	5¾	CyanConnode Hldgs♦	9⅞		...	-8.4
15½	8	Dillistone Group♦	12		...	-8.2
0½	0	Forgent♦	0		...	-0.0
165¾	94½	FDM Group	112⅞	- 2	6.2	21.6
480	114	Filtronic♦	250	- 6	...	...
265	156⅜	GB Group	161¾	+ 1¼	2.7	-5.3
51	24	Ilika♦	24¾	+ ¼	...	-6.2
138	56	Ingenta♦	68	+ ½	6.6	5.7
178	73	Intercede♦	111½	- 5	...	19.6
28½	11⅛	Iomart♦	14⅝		...	-1.8
72⅞	4⅝	IQE♦	50¾	+ 4⅛	...	-13.4
4453½	912⅝	LG Electronics	1453⅝	- ⅜	1.7	...
79	37	MTI Wireless♦	65	- 1½	3.1	15.0
14¼	2	Nanoco Group	2½		...	-2.2
138	94⅛	Netcall♦	118	- 1	0.8	48.2
36	22	Northamber♦	24½		2.4	-1.7
60⅜	37½	Oxford Metrics♦	40	- ¾	8.1	-72.7
31	17	Pennant Intl♦	29		...	-5.8
447	210	Playtech	389⅝	+ 7¼	...	0.9
50	27¼	Pulsar Group♦	28	- 3	...	-3.6
576½	398½	QinetiQ‡	557	- 6	2.0	27.7
117	88	RM	102		...	39.2
6½	2⅜	Seeing Machines♦	5	+ ⅜	...	-12.3
66	35½	Shearwater Group♦	57½		...	-1.4
2060	1083	Softcat	2000	- 52	1.5	30.0
50	5	Sorted Group#	9		...	-0.2
1018½	575½	Tele Ericsson	753	- 4¼	3.1	11.4
1181	771⅝	**The Sage Grp**	1047½	- 13	2.1	27.8
90	52½	Touchstar♦	82½		3.9	-6.2
435	280	Tracsis♦	330	- 5	0.8	...
430	236	Triad Group‡	410		2.2	41.3
360	210	Water Intel♦	355	+ 15	...	16.8
150	96⅜	Xaar	117	- 3	...	-27.2
17	8½	Zoo Digital♦	14½	+ ¼	...	-5.2

Telecoms

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
436¼	211⅝	**Airtel Africa**	326	- 3¼	1.6	23.8
242⅛	173	**BT Group**‡	198¼	- 2	4.2	18.0
169½	106	Currys	158	- 2¼	1.9	10.2
1186	687	Gamma Comms	973½	- 2	2.3	14.0
247⅝	122	Helios Towers‡	201⅜	- 3⅜	0.9	73.8
0⅜	0⅛	Gana Media♦	0⅛		...	-3.1
1916	638	Telecom Plus‡	906	+ 51	5.5	9.0
131⅛	83⅜	**Vodafone**	119⅝	- 1⅞	3.3	-84.8

Transport

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
260	203⅛	Braemar‡	220		3.2	30.4
5485	3365	Clarkson	5000	+ 14	2.3	23.4
683¾	332⅝	EasyJet	672	+ 1	2.0	10.2
233	152⅛	FirstGroup	182⅝	- 2	3.9	8.5
554	320	Fisher (James)	465	+ 2	...	-53.4
492⅞	332¾	**Intl Cons Air**	436½	- 7	1.6	7.2
699⅝	458	Irish Cont	677½	- 7½	2.1	17.0
36	17	Mobico Group	26⅜	+ ⅝	...	-1.2
7	1⅝	Sutton Harbour♦	4¼		...	-0.4
1453	832	Wizz Air	1070	- 10	...	...

Utilities

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
220¼	151½	**Centrica**	156	+ ⅛	3.6	-104.0
937½	613⅞	Drax Group	723	+ 3	4.2	34.9
485	420	Jersey Electricity	435		5.0	12.1
1428½	1000	**National Grid**	1189½	- 4	4.1	18.2
606	439⅜	Pennon‡	453⅝	- 8⅝	6.5	23.4
3335	2381	**Severn Trent**	3040	- 50	4.1	24.6
2767½	1597	**SSE**‡	2400	- 20	2.9	22.7
1497	1072	**United Utilities**	1388	- 24	3.9	16.1

INVESTMENT COMPANIES

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
4497	1825	**3i Group**	2788	+ 3	3.0	5.2
394½	325	3i Infrastructure	382	- 1	3.5	11.9
1758	1408⅛	Aberforth Smlr‡	1750	- 2	2.7	27.3
1394	1178	**Alliance Witan**	1376	- 11	2.1	74.4
404	321	Artemis UK Future Lead‡	398	+ 3½	3.9	32.2
210	116⅜	Athelney Trust	165		6.1	14.5
273	235½	AVI Global	265	+ ½	1.7	52.3
194	154½	AVI Japan	172	+ 1	1.3	58.5
331	266	Baillie Gifford Ch Gr	308	+ 2	0.8	...
133	91⅜	Baillie Gifford Eur Gr	122	- ½	0.6	...
1090	811⅛	Baillie Gifford Jpn	1070	+ 2	0.9	...
176	123	Baillie Gifford SN	172¾	+ ⅝	0.4	...
231	180½	Baillie Gifford UK Gr‡	222	- 2	2.8	35.6
154¾	121¾	Bankers Invstmt Tst‡	153¼	+ ¼	1.8	68.1
445	387¾	BH Macro GBP	428	+ 2	...	20.2
1762	846	Biotech Growth	1724	+ 26	...	-907.4
289½	197	BlckRck Amer Inc‡	281	- 4	5.3	99.3
205	120½	BlckRck Eng&Res Inc	182	+ 2½	3.2	52.0
208	164½	BlckRck Fro Inv	192	+ ½	4.0	25.6
625	507	BlackRock Grt Euro	618	+ 1	1.2	89.7
240	200	BlckRck Inc&Grth‡	234		3.3	32.4
288⅜	230¾	BlckRck Smlr‡	278½	- 1½	2.8	31.8
1072⅞	543⅛	BlckRck Wld Min	967	+ 17	2.5	40.2
1665	1275	Brown Adv US Sm	1632½	- 7½	...	-272.5
1584	1336	Brunner‡	1556	- 12	1.7	55.9
402	312	Caledonia Inv	394	- 2½	2.0	51.2
599	486	City of Lon IT‡	587	- 4	3.8	27.2
155⅜	86	Crystal Amber Fd	88		-63.8	...
592	439⅞	CT Priv Eq Ord	500		5.6	...
373	320	CT UK Cap & Inc	355	- 1	3.7	29.3
120	92	CT UK HIT B	109		5.5	22.5
126	97	CT UK HIT	117	- 2½	5.1	24.1
480¼	460	Dunedin Ent#	475		...	...
861	737⅝	Edinburgh IT	844	- 6	3.8	31.7
294½	186¾	Edin Wwide	264	+ 4	...	-237.8
1332	325¾	**F&C Inv Trust**	343	- 1⅜	1.2	76.3
672	546	Fidlty Asian Val	610		3.4	27.1
339	241	Fidelity China Sp	265	+ 2	3.4	28.7
1574	836	FdityEmrgMkt	1496	+ 18	1.3	65.4
447½	367½	Fidelity European Trust	441	- 1	2.2	39.0
477½	372	Fidlty Spec Val	471½	- 2½	2.2	38.4
915	706¼	Fins Gwth & Inc	807	- 11	2.5	42.7
85⅝	69¾	GCP Infrastructure‡	82¾	+ ¾	8.5	38.5
370	316	Global Opps Tst	336½	+ ½	3.1	43.1
108	104½	Golden Prospect‡	106½		-15.9	...
68⅞	57⅛	Greencoat Renew	66¾	- ⅛	-16.6	...
117	92¼	Greencoat UK Wind‡	110½	- ½	9.7	-12.7
346	250	Hansa Investment Co‡	344	+ 2	1.3	78.2
335	244	Hansa Inv Co A‡	334	+ 2	1.3	75.9
3500	2725	Hbrvest Glbl Pt Eq	3450	- 50	...	-58.4
214	173¼	Hend High Inc	207		5.4	18.4
998	769	Hend Smlr	982	- 8	3.0	37.6
3290¾	2285	Herald Inv Trust	3065	- 5	...	...
514⅝	318⅝	HgCapital Trust	426½	- ½	1.2	...
141	107¼	HICL Infra	137	- 1¾	6.2	9.9
1611⅜	1288¼	ICG Ent Tr‡	1484	- 6	2.8	-418.0
494¾	379	Impax Env Mkts	449½	+ 4½	1.1	91.0
519	368⅜	Invesco Asia Dragon Tr	492½	+ 2	3.9	50.1
178½	150⅛	Invesco Bond Inc	171	+ ½	7.2	13.1
427	318	Invesco Glbl Eq Inc	416	+ 1	3.8	83.0
1258	1041	JPM American	1246	- 2	0.9	...
652	395¼	JPM Asia Gro & Inc‡	590	+ 4	5.3	...
313	255	JPM China‡	277½	+ 4½	4.9	71.3
986	791¾	JPM Claverhs‡	976	+ 2	3.7	29.0
310	181⅝	JPM Emrg EMEA Sec	244	+ 2	0.2	...
181¼	118⅜	JPM Em Mkts	167⅞	+ 2⅝	4.5	72.8
666	548	JPMorgan Euro	634	- 1	2.5	34.9
221	145	JPM Em Mkts Div Inc	207	+ 1	2.9	36.4
641	529⅝	JPM GG&I	629	- 4	3.9	76.1
1098	799	JPM India‡	873		5.1	...
867	661	JPM Japan	861	+ 3	1.0	84.8
463	365	JPM Smllr Co	456½	+ 1½	0.7	...
1290	977⅜	Law Debenture	1250	- 10	3.0	33.5
191½	145½	Lowland Inv	187½	- ½	3.6	27.9
140	137¾	Marwyn Val Inv‡	138½		15.3	...
289	234¼	Mercantile IT	287	- 1	2.9	31.0
687	536	Merchants Trust‡	674	- 3	4.4	22.0
804	682	Mid Wynd	790	+ 2	1.1	...
1664	1366	Monks Inv Trust‡	1628	- 4	0.1	...
189	142	Montanaro Eur Sml‡	176½	- 1	0.9	91.0
1036	854⅝	Murray Income Trust‡	1000	- 4	4.1	25.9
372½	290	Murray Intl	368	- 1	3.5	26.5
437	345	Pacific Assets Trust	427		...	76.2
409	319½	Pantheon Intl	405	- 1½	...	...
5095	3636	**Pershing Sqr**‡	3944	+ 6	1.4	3.8
558	508	Personal Assets	550	- 1	1.0	91.2
743½	384	**Polar CapTech**	686	+ 11	...	-816.7
80½	63¼	Renewables Infra‡	75½	- ¼	10.0	-14.0
2645	1932	RIT Cap Ptnr	2610	- 15	1.7	...
990⅝	490	Riverstone	584	- 9	...	-364.7
738	488¾	Schroder TotRt	716	+ 8	1.6	73.0
892	603	Schrd Asia Pac	841	+ 4	1.5	63.7
378¾	311⅞	Schrod Inc Gwth	372	+ 2	4.0	29.6
401	276	Schrod Jap Gwth	395	+ 1	3.1	57.2
782	652	Schrod UKMid	777	- 1	2.9	31.0
17¾	12¾	Schroder UK PP Tr	17		...	-70.8
572	480½	Scot American‡	556	- 3	2.9	35.5
1563	1015¾	**Scot Mortgage**	1450½	+ 15	0.3	...
88	75½	Sequoia Eco‡	83¾	- 2⅛	8.2	12.3
253	215⅞	STS Glbl Inc Grwth	227	- 2	3.7	35.0
352	196⅝	Temp Emg Mkt	322½	+ 2½	1.6	59.8
429½	334	Temple Bar	423	- 2	3.7	30.7
198⅝	162¾	The Glbl Smaller‡	195¾	- 1⅜	1.6	66.4
9	0⅜	Potentially AI	6⅜		-1.6	...
364½	291	TR Property	308	- 3	5.2	19.5
202	187	UIL	202		19.9	...
302	243	Utilico Emerging Mkt	278	- 3	3.4	20.5
865	682	Vietnam Ent Inv	709	- 3	...	4.6
398	316	Ww Health	384	+ 3½	0.6	...

♦AIM company; # Price at suspension; † Ex dividend; ‡ Ex scrip; ▲ Ex rights issue; ▼ Ex all; § Ex capital distribution; * figures or report awaited; . . . No significant data. Companies in bold are constituents of the FTSE 100 Index. Investment Cos sector Nav Dis or Prm supplied by ICE Data Services.

Exchange rates

Australia $	1.90678 (-0.00375)
Canada $	1.88055 (+0.00277)
Denmark Kr	8.74733 (+0.00223)
Euro	1.1698 (+0.0003)
Hong Kong $	10.636 (+0.017)
Hungary	424.15 (-0.28)
Indonesia	24160.46 (+41.57)
Israel	4.0244 (+0.0269)
Japan Yen	216.103 (+0.435)
New Zealand $	2.29508 (-0.00162)
Norway Kr	12.7676 (-0.0144)
Poland	5.04304 (+0.00424)
Russia	115.198 (+1.181)
S Africa	21.92598 (+0.05528)
Sweden Kr	12.8728 (-0.0195)
Switzerland Fr	1.0979 (-0.00253)
Turkey Lira	64.9622 (+0.1769)
USA $	1.356 (+0.003)

Gold/precious metals

(US dollars per ounce)

Bullion: Open $4376.16

Close $4424.86 **High** $4428.13

Low $4367.36

AM $4393.60 **PM** $4405.80

Platinum $1780.659

Silver $66.3215

Palladium $1335.789

Money rates %

Base Rates Clearing Banks: 3.75%
ECB Refi 2.40%
Fed Fund 3.5-3.75%
Halifax Mortgage Rate (SVR) 7.24%

Sterling spot and forward rates

Mkt Rates for	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Copenhagen	8.7473	8.7469	-152.929	-410.968
Euro	1.1698	1.1695	-15.72	-41.88
Montreal	1.8806	1.8776	-26.98	-77.46
New York	1.3560	1.3530	-0.55	-1.4
Oslo	12.7681	12.7790	42.47	134.13
Tokyo	216.0980	215.5670	-61.98	-155.64
Zurich	1.0980	1.0998	-39.79	-112.6

Other sterling

Argentine peso	2017.66321-2017.66516
Australian dollar	1.90680-1.90699
Bahrain dinar	0.51020-0.51220
Brazilian real	7.03000-7.03200
Euro	1.16980-1.17060
Hong Kong dollar	10.63600-10.64000
Indian rupee	129.63130-129.71130
Indonesian rupiah	24160.46094-24200.46094
Kuwaiti dinar	0.41770-0.41970
Malaysian ringgit	5.50540-5.50740
New Zealand dollar	2.29504-2.29560
Singaporean dollar	1.73103-1.73186
South African rand	21.92588-21.93864
UAE dirham	4.98060-4.98260

Dollar rates

Australia	1.40580-1.40660
Canada	1.38690-1.38693
Denmark	6.45122-6.45185
Euro	0.86270-0.86310
Hong Kong	7.84450-7.84456
Japan	159.36700-159.37601
Malaysia	4.06000-4.06500
Norway	9.41710-9.41970
Singapore	1.27684-1.27691
Sweden	9.49365-9.49687
Switzerland	0.80971-0.80975

Data provided by ICE. Data as shown is for information purposes only. No offer is made by ICE or this publication

Regain bathing confidence with a new Aquability shower FITTED IN JUST ONE DAY*

FREE TOILET & BASIN WITH ANY SHOWER PURCHASED**

At Aquability, we can help you regain the confidence to shower and bathe safely in as little as one day*. Our walk-in and sit-down shower solutions are designed to help you feel more comfortable, confident and independent in your own home.

With over 32 years of experience and more than 55,000 installations completed, we know a thing or two about creating bathing solutions that work. So, if you are finding it difficult to get in and out of your old bath, pick up the phone and give us a call.

- **Easy access – low step in**
- **Optional seat and grab rail**
- **Slip-resistant floor**
- **Thermostatic shower controls**
- **Hygienic easy clean tile effect panels – no re-tiling or mouldy grout!**

"If only I'd discovered Aquability sooner! The whole process of taking out my old bath and fitting a new shower in just one day has been so simple."

Mrs G, Southampton

Trustpilot ★★★★★ RATED 'EXCELLENT'

For more details and a FREE brochure call

0800 316 0110

ASK FOR EXT. 84015

or visit us online at **AQUABILITY.COM**

U.K. MADE

*Time based on straightforward fitting.
**Not in conjunction with any other offer.

For more information and a FREE colour brochure return this coupon to FREEPOST RRGY-AHAX-AHSX, Aquability UK Ltd, Farnborough, GU14 0NR.

84015

Name _____

Tel _____

Address _____

_____

Postcode _____

Email _____

AQUABILITY
EASY, SAFE BATHING

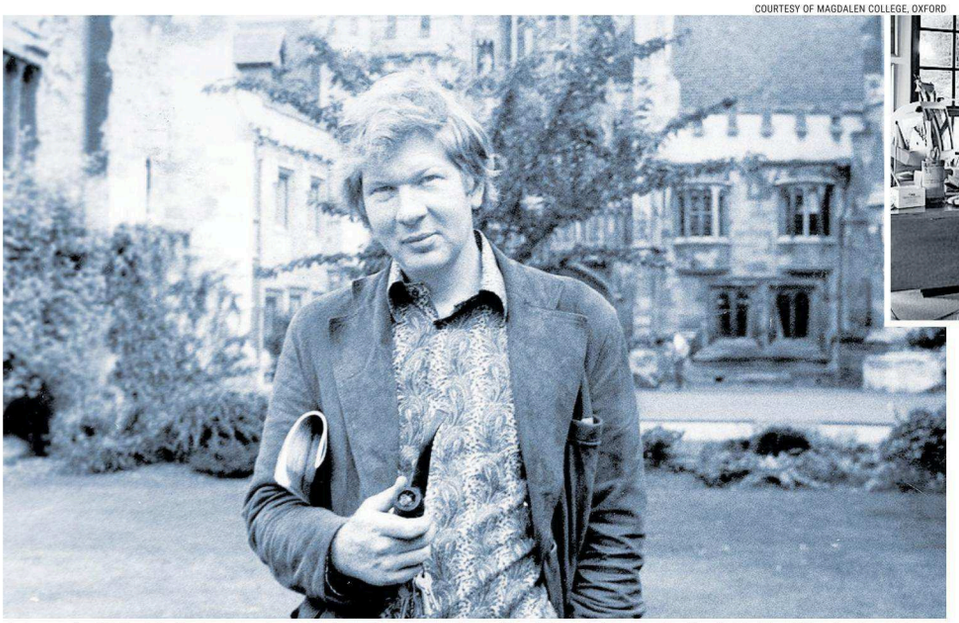
Actress who starred in Heroes and Nashville
Hayden Panettiere
Page 44

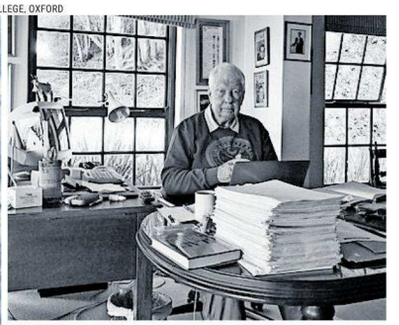
Obituaries

RW Johnson

Magdalen College fellow, Sunday Times correspondent and unapologetic critic of South Africa's post-apartheid political landscape

COURTESY OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD





Johnson in 1975 at Oxford, where he was viewed as a rare don with a life outside academia; right, his office in Cape Town

At the time, only one in ten people who developed necrotising fasciitis survived. RW Johnson had developed the condition in 2009 after going for a swim in the Mpenjati lagoon by Trafalgar, South Africa, and smacking his left foot on a rock. Though his foot healed in a few days, he developed a fever, which escalated. He checked into hospital, where he was pumped with antibiotics and had his left leg amputated above the knee. When his wife, Irina, flew back from Moscow, where she was a professor, she called from the airport. Would he still be alive after her 90-minute drive to the hospital? "He may or may not be. He's very, very critical."

Five months later, living with a prosthetic limb, he recounted the ordeal — though he could not help taking a swipe at the African National Congress, the ruling party in South Africa, which he hated. Hospitals in the public sector had "deteriorated very nearly to the point of collapse", he wrote in the diary column of the London Review of Books; though, characteristically, he was not generous to the other point of view. He did not write that his private care had been so expensive it had almost ruined him. Students he had once taught as a fellow at Magdalen College, Oxford, had a whip-round to bail him out.

Some people mistook his loathing for the ANC and its leadership as a shift rightwards for someone who had supported progressive causes, such as the end of apartheid, in his youth. He was instead a critical friend of the new South Africa, although he could perhaps have been more generous to some of those whom he critiqued. Johnson believed FW de Klerk (obituary, November 11, 2021), the last National Party president, was chiefly responsible for ending apartheid, not Nelson Mandela. An outspoken critic of Mandela, he once wrote that he "was widely loved, but he neither wanted to be president nor made much effort at the job."

Much of Johnson's bile, though, was saved for Mandela's vice-president and eventual successor, Thabo Mbeki, whose stubborn refusal to distribute anti-HIV medication in the Noughties cost hundreds of thousands of lives. What continued to eat away at Johnson was the culture of graft that Mbeki had allowed to develop and which continues to fester. Companies are, for instance, incentivised to sell a quota of shares to black entrepreneurs. Johnson thought the policy had replaced a class of wealthy white people with one of wealthy black people, without lifting the poorest out of poverty or giving them a job. "Many are young and have never worked and have given up hope that they ever will," he wrote in The Times in 2021. Universities were a particular concern of his. In 2000, he went as far as to suggest that Africa required "some form of recolonisation".

Though he never considered himself a "professional journalist", he did think it an "interesting hobby". Considering this, he was prolific. Having written regularly from the late 1970s for New Society, he wrote 125 articles for the London Review of Books (LRB), and for a time in the early 2000s he was South Africa correspondent for The Sunday Times. One notable success was his reporting in Harare in neighbouring Zimbabwe, where he revealed the suppression of media freedom and the closure of the country's newspapers. The Sunday Times launched a fundraiser to help to buy a new press for The Daily News, a local paper, after the previous one was destroyed. Some of his work, however, particularly on Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe's president, was not always entirely accurate.

His journalistic reputation was damaged by a post on the LRB's blog in 2010 in the run-up to the World Cup. "We are being besieged by baboons again," he wrote, describing how the creatures were scavenging for food. The next paragraph, describing migrants from other parts of Africa, read, "they too are here essentially searching for food". To some that was proof that he was a closet racist.

He organised opposition to an honorary degree for Margaret Thatcher

Johnson was shut out of the mainstream press in South Africa. Yet he continued to contribute to the British press, including the LRB, until he resigned in 2017 after it published a "grossly insulting" review of his book. It was not his last unforced departure. He quit a South African news website after it interviewed an opposition politician he had written about scathingly.

Richard William Johnson, widely known as Bill, was born in Wallasey, Merseyside, in 1943 to Stanley and Elsie. He was the second of six children and their house overlooked the Mersey docks, where his father would leave to work for long stretches on oil tankers. Johnson, who attended the St Anselm's Catholic school in Birkenhead, said he did not see his father for a single birthday or Christmas until he was eight years old. When his father's work shifted to Durban in South Africa, the whole family moved, including his two sisters and three brothers. Johnson, aged 13 at the time, initially despised his time in the country. At Northlands Boys High, an all-white school, truancy was rife — some would show up on their motorbikes, get registered and then head off for the beach, returning only to play rugby. They all seemed to accept apartheid yet he questioned it: why did the shop on the way home from school need separate entrances for black and white people?

He pushed himself through exams and got a place at the University of Natal, studying Latin, English, history and political science. There he became involved in student politics, which was seen by the security police as a hotbed of dissident liberals and communists. Johnson was one of them, identifying as a liberal. He would sneak into the home of Rowley Arenstein, a communist lawyer who was under house arrest, through a neighbouring window and hide in the servants' quarters if the police came to check the house. Increasingly, he worried that they were targeting him. He tried to organise pamphlets printed to commemorate the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, only for the police to somehow discover his plan and raid the Student Representative Council's office.

He won a Rhodes Scholarship in December 1963, giving him almost a year until the Oxford term started in October 1964. Johnson wrote: "I became almost unbearably tense as the day of my departure loomed, waiting for the security police to pounce." When he reached Magdalen, he received a letter from his mother saying the security police had come to detain him ten days after he left. They had been waiting for him to apply for a visa before arresting him, not realising he was a British citizen.

One consequence of Johnson's background and early life was a degree of ambiguity as to whether he was, or perceived himself to be, British or South African. In 1977 he declared: "Although an Englishman by birth and now again by residence, I enjoyed (and that is the right word) a South African boyhood." On another occasion he said he "was wholly recaptured by the magic of that wonderful country".

He graduated from Oxford with a degree in politics and was awarded an MPhil for his unfinished doctorate on the west African Republic of Guinea, a former French colony. He fell in love with French party politics, the subject of his second book *The Long March of the French Left*, published in 1981. *How Long Will South Africa Survive?*, his first book, published in 1977, argued that apartheid would be brought down on economic terms. A reviewer for Foreign Affairs called it a "sprawling, gossipy, entertaining, sometimes brilliant but not always accurate book".

His books experimented with different styles of political writing, although he averred he was not trying to change anyone's point of view necessarily. "My job is to do the writing, put it out there. That's me done. I'm not trying to be politically influential," he said.

After a short lectureship in the School of Social Studies at the University of East Anglia, in 1969 he returned to Magdalen, describing Oxford in the late Sixties as "the most tolerant atmosphere I had ever experienced in my life". There, at the age of 26, he was made the college's youngest fellow and for the next 25 years tutored in politics and sociology.

His students thought him approachable, a rare don who had a life outside academia and had written for mainstream publications. What he wrote appeared quite journalistic. "He seemed to see no particular distinction between writing for academic audiences and for public ones," recalled Bill Emmott, one of his students, who went on to edit The Economist.

Those he taught seemed to end up in high places, though he wondered how much of it was down to him. Stephen Milligan, Chris Huhne, William Hague and Jeremy Hunt were among several parliamentarians who were tutored by him. He also acted as a recruitment agency of sorts for The Economist. Andrew Knight, the editor, called him one day, saying the paper's brightest recruits had studied under him and asking him to recommend some students. He duly did, swelling the ranks of the over-represented "Magdalen mafia" at the paper.

In 1985 he organised Oxford's opposition to Margaret Thatcher receiving an honorary degree. The only other person that century who was denied the honour after being proposed was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, president of Pakistan, accused of a massacre in Bangladesh. Johnson took umbrage at Thatcher's "swingeing cuts to the education budget" and her "philistine view that if many of the best British ideas had ended up being marketed in America, British universities should be punished for their lack of entrepreneurship". He organised support from academics outside the left-wing clique, extending to the less partisan scientists and medical dons. They won by a two to one ratio.

He is survived by his second wife, Irina Filatova, a Russian academic, historian and professor emeritus at the University of KwaZulu-Natal whom he had met at a barbecue in Durban and married in 2002, and by Anne Summers, whom he married while at Oxford in 1968 and with whom he had two children, Rebecca and Richard.

Though he said he enjoyed the egalitarian spirit of Oxford, South Africa looked far more interesting in the early Nineties. He persuaded The Times to let him go to the country as a special correspondent after de Klerk's speech promising an end to apartheid and the release of activists from prison. Briefly returning to Oxford, he was drawn back to work on a study of the first free South African elections between 1992 and 1994. Though he knew he would not be able to get an academic posting, he became the director of the Helen Suzman Foundation, named after the only member of parliament who had opposed apartheid.

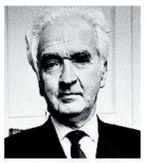
RW Johnson, academic and journalist, was born on September 21, 1943. He died of an infection on July 21, 2026, aged 82

Lives remembered

Trevor Fishlock

Brian Howlett writes: Trevor (obituary, August 14) and I were classmates and friends at Portsmouth Southern Grammar school in the early 1950s. He was a thoughtful and clever student, with a love for the English language. We would play football in the yard of his father's pub, which was next to the entrance to Fratton Park football ground. We also played cricket in Milton Park together. After each match Trevor would produce a "sports paper" printed by hand in tiny capital letters recording the highlights of each game — clearly a forerunner of his journalist career.

Lord Mackay of Clashfern



Jim Clark writes: I recall with some amusement driving to the Law Society of Scotland's annual conference at Gleneagles, Perthshire when Lord Mackay (obituary, July 7) was the principal guest speaker. The route was a winding road through Glendevon, scenic rather than fast at the best of times, and we joined a long queue of very slow traffic several miles short of Gleneagles. On eventual arrival, I discovered that Lord and Lady Mackay had headed the queue in their Daimler and that the respect and deference of attending solicitors was such that overtaking was not even contemplated. I very much doubt if his lordship was ever made aware of the situation, although I suspect that he too might have been amused.

Bonnie Tyler

David Wilbourne, honorary assistant bishop of York, writes: As a teenager, I remember singing along with the first hit by Bonnie Tyler (obituary, July 9) in 1976, *Lost in France*. Thirty-seven years later, as an English bishop lost in south Wales, I was preaching in Skewen near Neath. It was the Sunday following Bonnie's Eurovision Song Contest performance, sneered at by the intellectual elite. But at the start of my sermon I mentioned in passing that I'd been so proud to see her representing south Wales. What I didn't realise was that her brother and his family were in the congregation, and they were thrilled. Swansea had marked Tyler's Eurovision performance on a big screen in the city square, and her brother had treated the audience to a takeaway curry afterwards.

Professor Jason Arday

Tom Stubbs writes: The life, and sad death, of Professor Jason Arday (obituary, August 15) will surely be reflected in future dramas on stage and screen; his dizzying rise and catastrophic fall would have informed the heroic tragedies of Milton and Shakespeare. Although perhaps the 1967 Times headline of William Rees-Mogg, in describing the imprisonment of Mick Jagger — "Who breaks a butterfly on a wheel?" — has applicability.

Hayden Panettiere

Teenage star of Heroes whose later storylines in the TV hit drama Nashville reflected her troubled life

Hayden Panettiere was, as she put it, "groomed" to act from the cradle. She appeared in her first television commercial before she was one and at the age of four was cast in the soap opera *One Life to Live*, in which she appeared for the next four years.

She made her Hollywood screen debut at eight alongside Jennifer Aniston and Paul Rudd in *The Object of My Affection* and earned a Grammy nomination at nine for her role in the Disney animation *A Bug's Life*. By her midteens she was a household name and paparazzi fodder, playing a high-school cheerleader with supernatural powers in the popular TV drama *Heroes*. By then, according to Forbes, she was earning more than $2 million a year. "I was like a little soldier," she said of her childhood. "'No' was never an option. It was 'here are your scenes, here's your dialogue, memorise it, hit the marks, do what your director tells you'. I took my marching orders."

In *Heroes* her character was invulnerable but off screen Panettiere was the opposite. Like many a child actor, she was being marched into a battle in which the odds were stacked against her and which would lead to what she called a "horrible cycle for years of battling depression and anxiety and alcoholism and substance abuse".

"When Hayden isn't working, she enjoys singing, dancing, horseback riding, gymnastics, taking piano lessons and swimming," read an upbeat studio publicity handout. The truth was more disturbing and by the time she was old enough to be cast in adult roles, her life was unravelling. In 2012 at the age of 22 she landed the part of Juliette Barnes, a troubled country star battling alcoholism, addiction to prescription pills and postpartum depression and fighting for custody of her daughter in the TV hit drama *Nashville*. All of these gruelling storylines tragically mirrored the personal strife she was enduring off set.

"My character, Juliette, and me as Hayden, I didn't know where one person began and the other one ended," she told The Times in 2026. She starred in the series for six seasons and as her career took her to the heights and her life spiralled downwards, she found little support. "It's just shocking how little empathy people had," she said this year when promoting her candid and harrowing memoir *This Is Me: A Reckoning*. "There were plenty of people who made the choice to not protect me."

At one point in the book, referring to the paparazzi, she described herself as "raw meat laid out for a bunch of hyenas to devour every single day". The memoir might have been titled "Too Much Too Young" for it is hard to escape the conclusion that she was following an all-too-predictable path walked by female child stars from Judy Garland to Lindsay Lohan. "My life is so crazy and truth is genuinely stranger than fiction," she said.

Or perhaps it merely came to reflect the screen world's predisposition to portray a life less ordinary. It is hard, for example, to gauge what emotional or psychological effect it might have had on a young adolescent mind to star alongside Jessica Lange and Tom Wilkinson (obituary, December 30, 2023) at the age of 13 in the TV drama *Normal* as the daughter of a man who after 25 years of marriage transitions to a woman. Nor is it easy to forgive the TV executive who, when she was 16 and doing interviews to promote *Heroes*, gave her a "happy pill" to boost her energy. She later realised it was an amphetamine and dated the substance abuse that dogged her for years afterwards to that moment.

Her memoir, in which she also came out for the first time as bisexual, bravely confronted her addictions and mental health issues head on. Setting out "all the gory details" of her troubled life was "terrifying", she admitted, but the book also recounted the lengths she went to in order to overcome her demons. They included having a motto tattooed on her left side, which was supposed to say *Vivere senza rimpianti* — "live without regrets" in Italian. "It's not that you don't regret things in life, but you at least try to learn from them," she explained. Unfortunately, the tattooist misspelt the otherwise admirable maxim, adding an extra i, *rimipianti*. While Panettiere gamely joked about the indelible error, she could be forgiven for wondering if it was an omen.

ALAMY

Panettiere, at an awards event in 2005, was first cast in a soap opera aged four

'Saying no was never an option. It was ... do what your director tells you'

Hayden Lesley Panettiere was born in 1989 in Palisades, New York, the daughter of Lesley Vogel, a former soap opera actress who managed Hayden's early acting career, and Alan "Skip" Panettiere, a captain in the New York fire department. Her younger brother Jansen Panettiere was also a child actor and appeared with his sister in the 2004 Disney Channel movie *Tiger Cruise*. He died of a heart condition aged 28 in 2023 and his death hit her hard. "Among many other things, he's always been my favourite travelling companion. Whenever I was on location, I'd say, 'Get my brother here'," she said.

She was mostly home-schooled by private tutors to fit around her busy schedule of acting and modelling assignments; her mother pushed her hard and was a demanding coach. "I felt like the only way that I really could get her love was to do my job properly and God forbid I didn't do something the way that she wanted me to do it," she said. "It was soul-crushing to a child."

Among the TV soaps and the countless commercials — she was the face of the skincare company Neutrogena until fired under a "morality clause" in her contract that required her to present a squeaky-clean image at all times — there was a handful of decent films in which she displayed considerable acting promise.

At ten she appeared in the acclaimed *Remember the Titans* (2000) with Denzel Washington and five years later in *Lies My Mother Told Me* with Joely Richardson. In 2011 she portrayed Amanda Knox in the controversial true crime TV film *Amanda Knox: Murder on Trial in Italy* and in the same year her role in Wes Craven's slasher movie *Scream 4* was the best thing about the film.

However, she confessed to being irritated that she remained better known for lightweight fare such as Disney's *Ice Princess* and the high school comedy franchise *Bring It On*, complaining that people "always slip me into this category of 'that's what she's always involved in'."

When she was cast as the cheerleader Claire Bennet in *Heroes* in 2006 her entire family moved with her from New York to Hollywood, her money buying her parents' new home. A few years later she paid the legal bills as they went through a prolonged and messy divorce. She remained close to her father but described her relationship with her mother as "non-existent".

After *Nashville* went off air in 2018, she took a long break during which her personal life grew even more turbulent. In 2009 she had met the Ukrainian boxer Wladimir Klitschko at a party in Los Angeles. He was 6ft 6in to her 5ft 1in and 14 years older, but they began a relationship and when not filming she flew round the world to watch his bouts and visited him in Ukraine. In 2014 she unexpectedly became pregnant and gave birth to Klitschko's daughter, Kaya, after which she sank into a deep postnatal depression which she described as a "total blackout of emotion, like my soul was dead".

With Klitschko living thousands of miles away in Ukraine, she began drinking more and more heavily and when her daughter was four months old, she checked herself into a rehabilitation centre. Doctors prescribed the drug Klonopin, to which she swiftly became addicted while still drinking. "I was on top of the world and I ruined it," she told People magazine. "I'd think I hit rock bottom, but then there's that trap door that opens." At her lowest point, she admitted that she needed a drink first thing in the morning just to get out of bed.

In 2018 she visited Klitschko in Kyiv and when he saw the fragile state she was in, he sued for full custody of their three-year-old daughter. Mired in addiction and depression, she reluctantly agreed to give up Kaya. The decision, she said, was a "living nightmare" and "heartbreaking" but necessary for her recovery and in her daughter's best interests.

The child continued to live with her father in Ukraine before moving when Russia launched its invasion. Panettiere reported in 2026 that she talked to her daughter regularly on FaceTime and visited when she could but "not nearly as often as I wish ... I want my child next to me every single day".

After separating from Klitschko, she began a volatile relationship with Brian Hickerson, a Los Angeles estate agent, who assaulted her during violent rages and in 2021 spent 45 days in prison for his abuse.

Like many victims, she partly blamed herself. "I've often wondered whether I've brought on my traumas because I'm wired to think they're good for me," she wrote in her memoir, extracts of which were published in The Times.

When asked how long she had been sober, she was evasive. "I feel like I have a second chance but I'm a work in progress," she said. "I take each day as it comes. I'm doing the work, and I'm doing my best."

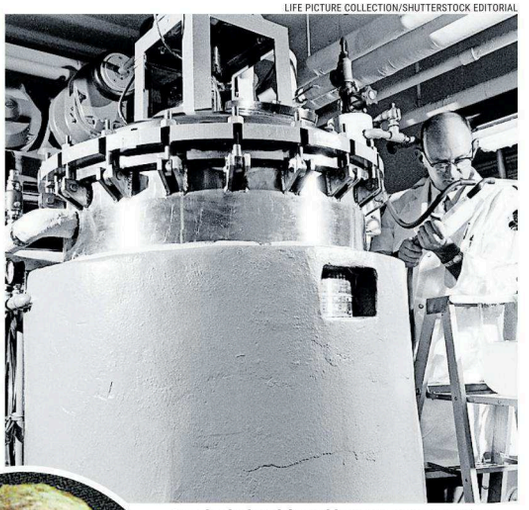
Hayden Panettiere, actress, was born on August 21, 1989. She died of undisclosed causes on August 16, 2026, aged 36

Email: obituaries@thetimes.co.uk

Professor Patricia Jacobs

Pioneering geneticist behind the discovery of an abnormal chromosome in a human

LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION/SHUTTERSTOCK EDITORIAL



Jacobs helped found human cytogenetics

The path of Patricia Jacobs's career as a geneticist was determined during the hot summer of 1956, when she failed to find enough centipedes in Scotland to carry out research on their chromosomes. She was told to work instead on the testicles of praying mantises.

Jacobs would go on to become one of Britain's most influential geneticists but at that moment, as a student at the University of Edinburgh, she almost panicked as she discussed the issue with HG Callan, known as "Mick", who was head of the zoology department. "He was very strict and I was actually scared of him," she recalled in an interview years later. "I thought, 'Oh my God, if I can't find centipedes, how in the world am I going to find praying mantises? They don't even live in this country'. And then he got a little pot and he said, 'Here you are', and he gave me this little pot that contained 17 testicles of praying mantises, which he had brought back from Italy."

At that moment, Jacobs knew little of the techniques needed to undertake the task. As the only honours student attached to the zoology department at the Ashworth Laboratories, she worked alone for a year and succeeded in analysing the chromosomes of the praying mantises. "It was fascinating," she said, "because they had a very interesting sex-determining mechanism and it was XXY, and I ended up getting chromosomes out and publishing a paper with Callan."

After spending a year as a research assistant at a college in the United States, Jacobs received a letter from Callan that paved the way for her to join a group of scientists led by Michael Court Brown at the Medical Research Council (MRC). He was regarded as one of the most far-sighted and dynamic figures in the field of human genetics. He specialised in cytogenetics, which involves the study of chromosomes, their structure, function and behaviour and how changes in them cause disease.

While working with Court Brown in Edinburgh, Jacobs became the first scientist to discover an abnormal chromosome in a human, specifically the 47, XXY constitution in males with Klinefelter syndrome. This is a condition found in men who have an extra chromosome, causing symptoms such as infertility and abnormally tall stature. Her discovery represented a milestone in the study of human genetics as it showed the first evidence that the Y chromosome was "male determined" in mammals.

In an interview with Peter Harper of the European Society of Human Genetics in 2004, Jacobs recalled how she had been examining chromosomes taken from bone marrow in patients with leukaemia when she had been given the chance by a "far-sighted endocrinologist" called John Strong to examine samples from a Klinefelter patient. She said preparations for analysing the chromosomes were "really very bad". She thought there were 47 chromosomes, with two Xs and a Y, but she had found it difficult to identify them.

A little later, Jacobs asked her technician to prepare a tray of slides that included the Klinefelter samples among many others. "I scored them blind," she said — meaning evaluating test samples without knowing the patient's identity or the treatment they had received — "and I thought, 'Well, that's funny', because there's two that seemed to have 47 chromosomes, not just one as I'd expected. So I said to her, 'I've got two that I really think might have 47 chromosomes', and she broke into a big grin, because she had put two from the Klinefelter's in the tray."

Jacobs informed Court Brown, who recognised the significance of her discovery. He told her to write up the details of her research in a scientific paper, which she had never done on her own before. "So I went off and wrote this paper — with great difficulty, I have to say — and brought it back and showed it to Michael Court Brown and I have never forgotten that," she said. "He tore it in shreds and I stood there nearly in tears, and I said, 'But it is the first paper I have ever written', and he said, 'That is exactly what it looks like'. So I had another go with his help and that was it. So we published that paper and this was the famous Jacobs and Strong report."

Jacobs spent 15 years with the MRC and is considered to have been one of the founders of the science of human cytogenetics. Her research included pioneering work on Down's syndrome and spontaneous abnormalities in miscarriages, as well as fragile X syndrome, a genetic disorder that can lead to a variety of developmental issues.

"Pat always led by example with an absolute dedication to the integrity and interpretation of data," the American Journal of Human Genetics reported. "She had a strong and persuasive personality and built successful research teams, initially in Edinburgh, then Hawaii, New York and finally in Salisbury in the United Kingdom." The journal added: "She did not suffer fools gladly; she worked hard and expected the same of her trainees."

In 1971 Jacobs met the American geneticist Professor Newton Morton, a pioneer in the field of genetic epidemiology. The couple were married a year later. "He was in Hawaii and I was still in Edinburgh and it wasn't working out very well," she said, "so I upped sticks and went to Hawaii, still doing human research."

Her career took off when she worked on the testicles of praying mantises

The couple made a formidable scientific team, but Jacobs disapproved of spouses working in the same place. "I think it's appalling for them," she said, "and I think it's even worse for the people who work with them." So Jacobs joined the medical department while Morton worked in the biology department, which meant "we were completely physically and administratively separated".

In 1985 the couple moved to New York, where Jacobs became head of human genetics at Cornell University Medical College and her husband led the department of epidemiology and biostatistics at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Three years later they moved to southern England, where they remained for the rest of their careers.

Jacobs became director of the Wessex Regional Genetics Laboratory at Salisbury District Hospital from 1988 until her retirement in 2001, as well as honorary professor of genetics within medicine at the University of Southampton. Morton became head of the genetic epidemiology unit at the same university.

In its tribute to her work, the American Journal of Human Genetics wrote: "Under Pat's leadership, the regional genetics laboratory grew into a multidisciplinary clinical cytogenetic and molecular cytogenetic centre of excellence."

Jacobs received many honours for her work. She was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1993 — 30 years after her mentor Callan was afforded the same honour — and awarded an OBE for services to genetics in 1999. She was made a member of the US National Academy of Sciences, a prestigious and rare accolade for a non-American, in 2010.

Patricia Jacobs was born in London in 1934, the daughter of Sadie (née Jones) and Cyril Jacobs, who was an accountant working for ICI's explosives division. The family moved to Saltcoats, about 30 miles southwest of Glasgow, at the start of the Second World War because of her father's work. Patricia, who had a younger brother, Peter, always considered herself to be Scottish.

At school in Scotland, Patricia excelled at the sciences, but struggled with languages. "This was in the days of the Scottish Highers, when you had to sit a bunch of subjects and pass them altogether or you failed the lot," Jacobs said. "I very nearly didn't get to university at all because I couldn't pass lower French. In those days you had to have a foreign language, even if you were doing science, to get into university anywhere in Scotland ... and eventually, with great difficulty, I passed lower French, and lower French at that time was very low!"

She was awarded a place at the University of St Andrews where, instead of studying physics and chemistry as expected, she chose botany, which had been a serious hobby throughout her childhood, and then zoology.

After retiring in 2001 she remained honorary professor at the University of Southampton. She lived with Morton, who had three sons and two daughters from his first marriage, in the village of Alderbury, three miles southeast of Salisbury, where they often played tennis on the local courts and frequented the Green Dragon pub. She enjoyed walking, gardening and entertaining friends. The couple retreated to her house on the Isle of Barra in the Outer Hebrides every summer. Her husband died in 2018 aged 88.

Jacobs developed Alzheimer's disease in her late eighties and spent the last three years of her life in a nursing home.

Her love of botany remained with her to the end of her life, and she was laid to rest in a woodland cemetery surrounded by wild flowers.

Professor Patricia Jacobs OBE, human geneticist, was born on October 8, 1934. She died on March 15, 2026, aged 91, after suffering a stroke

Births, Marriages and Deaths

To book a Birth, Marriage or Death announcement in the Register, visit: newsukadvertising.co.uk for help, please call 020 7782 7553 or email BMDs@thetimes.co.uk

FOR you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. Galatians 5.13 (ESV)

Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

Births

EGERTON-WARBURTON on 3rd August 2026 to Philippa (née Wyndham Jones) and Piers, a son, Arto Piers Wyndham.

Forthcoming Marriages

MR P. J. E. KILBY AND MISS E. F. F. ENGLISH
The engagement is announced between Philip, eldest son of Mr and Mrs J Kilby of Stoke St Mary, Somerset, and Eleanor, eldest daughter of Colonel (ret'd) and Mrs William English of Wateringbury, Kent.

CAPT D. S. G. STEVENS AND LADY CELESTE M. L. PRIMROSE
The engagement is announced between Sam, son of the late Mr David Stevens, and of Mrs Zazi Stevens of Chorleywood, Hertfordshire, and Celeste, youngest daughter of the Earl of Rosebery of Dalmeny House, West Lothian, and Caroline, Lady Dalmeny of Cowdenknowes House, Berwickshire.

MR E. J. C. TREADWELL AND MISS A. F. WILSON
The engagement is announced between Edward, son of Mr and Mrs John Treadwell of Putney, London, and Annie, daughter of Mr and Mrs Paddy Wilson of Norwich, Norfolk.

Deaths

BOOT Jean Cecilia (née Cameron) on 12th August 2026 peacefully at home surrounded by her family. Beloved wife of the late John Boot and mother to Rosemary, Caroline and Peter. Funeral arrangements to be announced through A. W. Lymn Funeral Guide in due course.

BREAKELL Pat. Died peacefully in her sleep, aged 92. Loving widow of Bob. Beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Funeral at Guildford Crematorium on 28th August 2026 at 12.45pm and afterwards at Loxwood Village Hall. Family flowers only please. Donations to Cranleigh RDA or Chestnut Tree House welcome.

CHACE Margaret Mary (née Newman) died peacefully on 9th August 2026, aged 96, at Cann House, Plymouth. Beloved wife of Captain John Chace (deceased), much-loved Mum, Mum-in-law, Granny, Great-Granny and friend. She will be greatly missed by us all.

CRAVEN Kirstie (née Watkins) passed away peacefully on 25th July 2026, aged 56. Funeral service at St Michael and All Angels Church, Sunninghill, on Thursday 27th August at 11am. Family flowers only. Donations, if desired, to Save Our Spaniels and the Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation via Lodge Brothers, Ascot.

GREER WALKER Michael died at home on 31st July, aged 85. He will be very much missed by all who knew him. Funeral Friday 21st August 11am, Herringfleet Church, NR32 5QS. Any donations to Prostate Cancer UK c/o Arthur Jary and Sons, 76 Denmark Road, Lowestoft, NR32 2EQ.

PHELAN
Michael Damien OBE, retired foreign exchange broker, died peacefully on 1st August 2026, aged 86. Devoted sparring partner and friend to his late wife Lily. Loving father to Sue, Joanna, Kate and Victoria and grandfather to Tom. He will be sadly missed by everyone lucky enough to have known him. A Requiem Mass for Michael is to be held at St Teresa's Church in Beaconsfield at noon on Wednesday 26th August 2026. Family flowers only please however should you wish to make a contribution in memory of Michael then donations to either SPICMA or Dementia UK will be gratefully received. All inquiries c/o Arnold Funeral Service, 01494 685000.

ROBINSON Sarah Louise Bradford (née Myles) on 14th August 2026, aged 76, after a long illness. Much loved by husband Michael, daughter Cara and her late son Myles and three grandchildren.
A thanksgiving service will be arranged at a future date.

SJÖLIN
Rosemary Ann (née Brooking) passed away peacefully on 4th August 2026, aged 84. Traveller, translator, wife, mother and grandmother.

There is no Court Circular for Monday August 17, 2026

The perfect gift for new parents

'She's a champion sleeper and a true foodie in the making'

Isabella Sofia Mihill Marquez was born on September 15, 2024, at University College Hospital, north London, to Gabriela, 33, and Timothy Mihill, 34

She appeared in The Times on Saturday April 19, 2025

Celebrate the arrival of a newborn in Readers' Lives, a service in contracted tributes

Call 020 7782 5583 or email readerslives@thetimes.co.uk

50% discount for subscribers

THE TIMES

THE TOP PARTNER FOR
Fred.Olsen Cruise Lines

✔ THE UK'S NO.1 INDEPENDENT CRUISE SPECIALIST
✔ ABTA & ATOL PROTECTED ✔ UNBEATABLE VALUE

ROL CRUISE 30 TRUSTED FOR OVER 30 YEARS

THE UNMISSABLE NO-FLY REMOTE *SCOTTISH ISLES* CRUISE SALE

CABINS SELLING FAST

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE++

DRINKS & GRATUITIES INCLUDED++

PROMOTION ENDS 8PM 23RD AUGUST 2026

YOUR BREATHTAKING JOURNEY

This adventure closer to home invites you to explore the most remote corners of Scotland, where sweeping coastlines, rugged islands and dramatic sea cliffs set a spectacular scene. Time ashore offers the chance to wander among ancient stone circles, hike scenic coastal paths, spot puffins in the Hebridean wild, and join in lively ceilidhs – traditional gatherings alive with folk music, dancing and storytelling. At sea, you'll pass striking landmarks such as the towering Old Man of Hoy sea stack, Foula – the UK's remotest inhabited island – and the Isle of Arran, its eastern outline said to resemble a sleeping warrior. Throughout your journey, watch for seabirds, seals and other wildlife from out on deck with guidance from Ocean Wildlife Encounters experts.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- **MONEY-BACK SATISFACTION GUARANTEE++**
  - Fred. Olsen are so confident you'll love cruising with them, if within 48 hours of boarding you feel it isn't right for you, they'll fly you home from the next available port at their expense, and your cruise fare will be refunded in full.

No-fly cruising on board the 1,338-guest ***Bolette***, including:

- **INCLUDED DRINKS** with lunch & dinner, including house beer, wine and draught soft drinks
- **INCLUDED** Gratuities
- **OCEANS MEMBERS SAVE 5%±**
- On board currency is pound sterling
- All meals included

PLUS, book an Ocean View or above by 8pm 23rd August 2026 to receive an **EXCLUSIVE FREE** Duo of English Wine Gift+

EARN EXCLUSIVE CRUISE MILES® worth **£££s** towards your next cruise with ROL Cruise††

9 NIGHTS DEPARTING 18TH MAY 2027

MAY 2027

Tue 18	**Embark *Bolette* and depart Newcastle**
Thu 20	**Lerwick, Shetland Isles, Scotland**
Fri 21	***Cruise off Shetland, pass by Shack & view Foula***
Sat 22	**Oban, Scotland** ***Cruising by Duart Castle***
Sun 23	***Cruising by Dutchman's Cap & Fingal's Cave, pass Ailsa Craig, view the Sleeping Warrior & Cruise by Mull of Kintyre***
Mon 24	**Portree, Isle of Skye, Scotland** Portree is set within a natural harbour surrounded with brightly-coloured houses and rocky cliffs. Serving as gateway to the rock formations at Trotternish Ridge, the Tusdale ruins and Dunvegan Castle. Close by is Loch Coruisk, home to puffins, golden eagles, oystercatchers and occasional sea eagles
Tue 25	**Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, Scotland**
Wed 26	***Cruising by Old Man of Hoy & Duncansby sea stacks***
Thu 27	**Arrive in Newcastle**

Date not mentioned will be spent relaxing at sea

YOUR EXCLUSIVE ROL CRUISE SALE FARES FROM

INSIDE (PP)	OCEAN VIEW (PP)	TERRACE (PP)	SUITE (PP)
£1,459	£1,839	£2,999	£3,299

Solo cabins are available from **£2,759**

SECURE YOUR CABIN WITH A DEPOSIT

rolcruise.co.uk/times
TRAVEL WITH CONFIDENCE
ABTA ABTA No F9255

CALL ONE OF OUR CRUISE SPECIALISTS **FREE** ON

0808 239 3022

QUOTE OFFER REF **644749**

WE ARE OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK FROM 8:30AM – 8PM

Trustpilot

Platinum Trusted Service Award 2026 feefo

Fares are based on two adults sharing and may increase or be withdrawn at any time. Offer applies to new bookings only. Pricing and availability correct at time of sign off 17/08/2026. Wildlife sightings are not guaranteed. ±Oceans members discount will be applied at the time of booking and T&Cs apply. ++Subject to the cruise line's T&Cs. Fred. Olsen Satisfaction Guarantee T&Cs apply. +Gift is based on one per booking, for UK mainland addresses only. ††Cruise Miles® T&Cs apply. Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines T&Cs apply. E&OE

Today Spells of rain and showers, heaviest in northwestern Scotland. Max 28C (82F), min 9C (48F)

Around Britain

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, s=sun, t=thunder *=previous day **=data not available

	Temp C midday yesterday		Rain mm 24 hrs to 5pm yesterday	Sun hr*
Aberdeen	16	C	0.2	0.2
Aberporth	16	D	0.8	4.6
Anglesey	19	C	0.6	0.9
Aviemore	18	C	2.6	0.0
Barnstaple	21	C	0.8	**
Bedford	23	C	0.0	**
Belfast	17	C	6.0	0.0
Birmingham	24	C	0.0	**
Bournemouth	23	D	0.0	3.7
Bridlington	18	C	3.6	**
Bristol	24	S	0.0	4.9
Camborne	19	R	2.2	11.1
Cardiff	21	C	**	6.5
Edinburgh	16	C	0.0	0.1
Eskdalemuir	16	C	1.4	0.1
Glasgow	16	C	0.6	0.0
Hereford	25	PC	0.0	**
Herstmonceux	25	C	0.0	1.9
Ipswich	22	C	0.0	3.0
Isle of Man	17	R	3.0	0.6
Isle of Wight	25	PC	0.0	**
Jersey	19	D	0.0	9.6
Keswick	18	C	3.0	**
Kinloss	**	**	0.4	0.3
Leeds	17	D	4.0	**
Lerwick	11	R	1.0	0.0
Leuchars	16	C	0.0	2.0
Lincoln	21	C	0.0	3.9
Liverpool	20	R	0.2	**
London	27	C	0.0	1.8
Lyneham	23	C	0.0	3.7
Manchester	22	C	0.0	1.7
Margate	20	C	6.6	6.3
Milford Haven	21	C	0.2	**
Newcastle	18	C	0.8	**
Nottingham	21	C	0.0	4.0
Orkney	13	C	0.2	**
Oxford	26	PC	0.0	**
Plymouth	22	C	0.0	**
Portland	22	PC	0.0	**
Scilly, St Mary's	21	D	0.0	**
Shoreham	25	C	0.0	2.3
Shrewsbury	23	C	0.0	3.6
Snowdonia	19	R	0.4	**
Southend	20	C	1.4	6.7
South Uist	16	PC	1.8	**
Stornoway	16	C	2.6	0.0
Tiree	14	R	5.0	0.5
Whitehaven	17	R	4.0	0.0
Wick	**	C	0.2	**
Yeovilton	24	C	0.0	5.7

The world

All readings local midday yesterday

Alicante	35	S	Madeira	27	PC
Amsterdam	20	B	Madrid	33	S
Athens	28	S	Malaga	30	PC
Auckland	12	PC	Mallorca	33	PC
Bahrain	40	S	Malta	33	PC
Bangkok	34	PC	Melbourne	14	PC
Barbados	31	PC	Mexico City	26	PC
Barcelona	32	PC	Miami	34	PC
Beijing	30	S	Milan	27	S
Beirut	**	**	Mombasa	29	PC
Belgrade	34	S	Montreal	22	DU
Berlin	19	SH	Moscow	22	PC
Bermuda	29	PC	Mumbai	28	R
Bordeaux	28	DU	Munich	25	SH
Brussels	22	B	Nairobi	20	B
Bucharest	30	S	Naples	30	PC
Budapest	30	S	New Orleans	32	PC
Buenos Aires	18	C	New York	26	B
Cairo	31	PC	Nice	30	PC
Calcutta	27	R	Nicosia	32	PC
Canberra	13	DU	Oslo	15	PC
Cape Town	17	PC	Paris	28	S
Chicago	29	B	Perth	16	SH
Copenhagen	18	B	Prague	23	PC
Corfu	31	PC	Reykjavik	15	B
Delhi	33	**	Riga	21	PC
Dubai	42	PC	Rio de Janeiro	25	B
Dublin	18	B	Riyadh	45	S
Faro	24	PC	Rome	31	B
Florence	22	PC	San Francisco	21	B
Frankfurt	19	S	Santiago	9	B
Geneva	21	SH	São Paulo	23	S
Gibraltar	28	B	Seoul	27	B
Helsinki	19	B	Seychelles	29	PC
Hong Kong	33	PC	Singapore	32	B
Honolulu	27	R	St Petersburg	19	B
Istanbul	27	B	Stockholm	18	S
Jerusalem	31	PC	Sydney	15	B
Johannesburg	20	S	Tel Aviv	31	PC
Kuala Lumpur	33	PC	Tenerife	28	PC
Kyiv	**	**	Tokyo	27	PC
Lanzarote	30	PC	Vancouver	19	PC
Las Palmas	28	PC	Venice	27	S
Lima	21	DU	Vienna	23	S
Lisbon	34	S	Warsaw	22	PC
Los Angeles	24	PC	Washington	24	C
Luxor	40	S	Zurich	20	PC

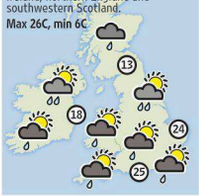
Five days ahead

Unsettled with spells of rain and showers. Warm at times in the far south of England

Tomorrow

Sunny periods and scattered heavy showers. Showers may merge to form longer spells of rain across Northern Ireland, northern England and southwestern Scotland.

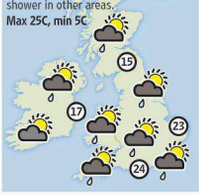
Max 26C, min 6C



Thursday

Sunny periods and scattered heavy showers in England, Wales, southern Ireland and eastern Scotland. Sunny periods with a small chance of a light shower in other areas.

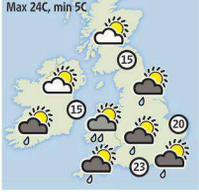
Max 25C, min 5C



Friday

Sunny periods with scattered showers in southern Ireland, England and Wales. Largely dry with sunny periods in the north of Ireland and Scotland.

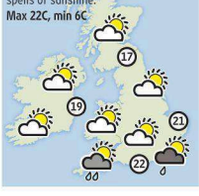
Max 24C, min 5C



Saturday

Heavy showers will clear the far south and east of England during the morning leaving a dry and sunny afternoon. Largely dry elsewhere with spells of sunshine.

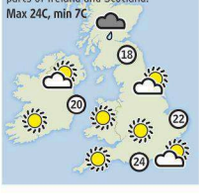
Max 22C, min 6C



Sunday

Scattered showers in northwestern Ireland and northern and western Scotland. Dry with lengthy spells of sunshine in England, Wales and other parts of Ireland and Scotland.

Max 24C, min 7C



The Times weather page is provided by WeatherQuest

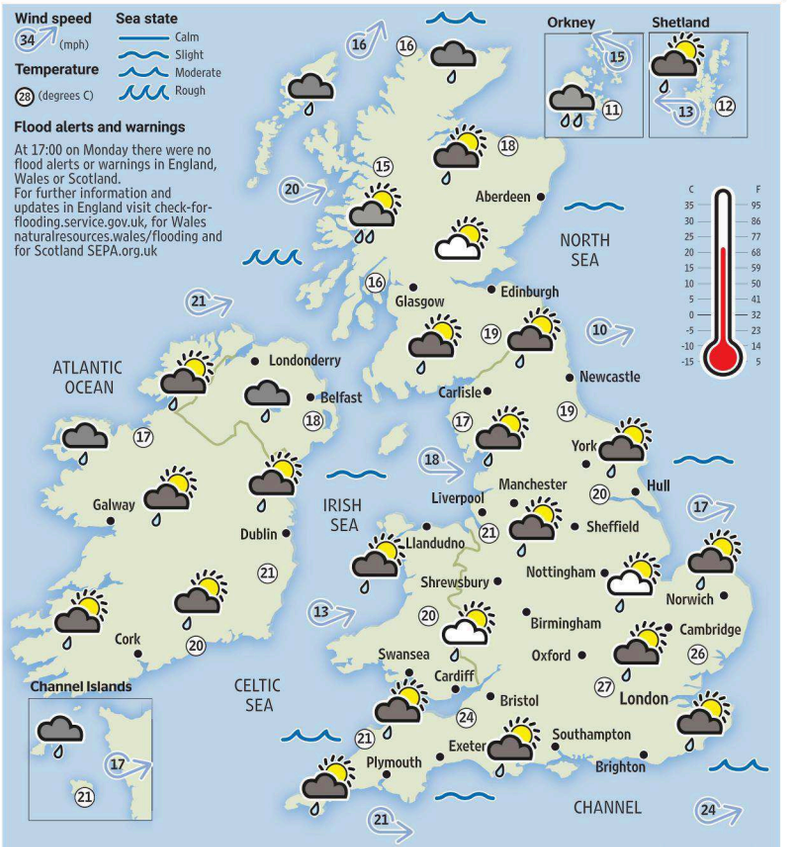
Wind speed 34 (mph)

Temperature 28 (degrees C)

Sea state: Calm, Slight, Moderate, Rough

Flood alerts and warnings

At 17:00 on Monday there were no flood alerts or warnings in England, Wales or Scotland.
For further information and updates in England visit check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk, for Wales naturalresources.wales/flooding and for Scotland SEPA.org.uk



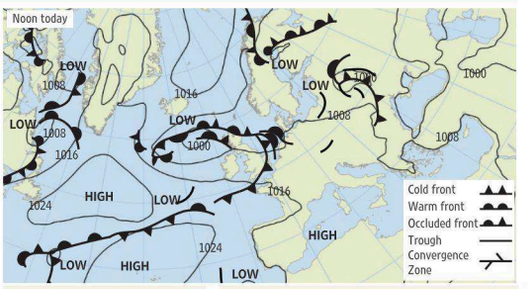
General situation: Showers or longer spells of showery rain. Driest in central England. Rain will be heaviest in northwestern Scotland.
London, SE Eng, E Anglia, Cen S Eng, SW Eng, Channel Is: A cloudy day with spells of rain in the Channel Islands. Elsewhere, cloud and rain will clear through the morning leaving a drier afternoon with hazy spells of sunshine. Moderate west or northwesterly winds. Maximum 28C (82F), minimum 12C (54F).

NW Eng, Cen N Eng, Lake District, NE Eng, Wales: Bright spells and scattered light showers. Gentle to moderate westerly winds. Maximum 23C (73F), minimum 9C (48F).
Midlands, E Eng: Hazy spells of sunshine with a small chance of an isolated shower. Moderate west or northwesterly winds. Maximum 25C (77F), minimum 12C (54F).
NW Scotland, Argyll, NE Scotland, Moray Firth, N Isles: Cloudy with outbreaks of rain and showers. Fresh southeasterly winds in the Northern Isles. Moderate southwesterly winds elsewhere. Maximum 19C (66F), minimum 9C (48F).
N Ireland, Republic of Ireland, IoM, SW Scotland, Edinburgh and Dundee, Borders, Cen Highland, Aberdeen: Hazy sunny intervals with the chance of a few light showers. Thick cloud and light rain and drizzle will spread into Ireland later. Moderate west or northwesterly winds. Maximum 21C (70F), minimum 9C (48F).

Tides

Tidal predictions.
Heights in metres. All times in local time

Today		Ht		Ht
Aberdeen	05:38	4.1	18:10	3.7
Avonmouth	11:34	12.1	23:45	11.9
Belfast	03:29	3.5	15:58	3.1
Cardiff	11:20	11.2	23:32	11.0
Devonport	10:09	5.0	22:13	5.0
Dover	03:23	6.3	15:40	6.5
Dublin	03:38	3.9	16:08	3.6
Falmouth	09:36	4.8	21:48	4.8
Greenock	04:34	3.6	17:13	3.1
Harwich	04:05	3.8	16:13	3.9
Holyhead	02:30	5.4	14:53	4.9
Hull	10:32	7.3	22:57	6.6
Leith	07:03	5.3	19:26	4.9
Liverpool	03:15	9.0	15:35	8.5
London Bridge	06:17	6.8	18:28	6.8
Lowestoft	01:50	2.3	13:49	2.6
Milford Haven	10:36	6.4	22:52	6.3
Morecambe	03:26	9.0	15:47	8.5
Newhaven	03:18	6.3	15:38	6.3
Newquay	09:30	6.2	21:46	6.1
Oban	09:53	3.4	22:02	3.4
Penzance	09:00	5.0	21:16	5.0
Portsmouth	03:49	4.4	16:21	4.5
Shoreham	03:31	5.9	15:52	5.9
Southampton	05:01	4.2	17:52	4.3
Swansea	10:43	8.7	22:57	8.5
Tees	08:02	5.4	20:31	4.9
Weymouth	11:03	1.8	23:10	1.8



Synoptic situation

A cold front will bring outbreaks of rain to the Channel Islands through the day and to parts of southern and eastern England through the morning. A series of occlusions will bring outbreaks of rain to Northern Ireland and northern and western Scotland. Elsewhere, there will be a mixture of sunny periods and scattered showers. Driest in the Midlands.

Highs and lows

24hrs to 5pm yesterday

Warmest: Heathrow, Greater London, 28.0C
Coldest: Cairngorm, 5.1C
Wettest: Malham Tarn, North Yorkshire, 8.0mm
Sunniest: Camborne, 11.1hrs*

Sun and moon

For Greenwich
Sun rises: 05.50
Sun sets: 20.17
Moon rises: 13.07
Moon sets: 21.51
First quarter: August 20

Hours of darkness

Aberdeen	21:12-05:13
Belfast	21:19-05:37
Birmingham	20:57-05:27
Cardiff	20:59-05:35
Exeter	20:59-05:38
Glasgow	21:17-05:26
Liverpool	21:04-05:29
London	20:47-05:22
Manchester	21:01-05:25
Newcastle	21:03-05:18
Norwich	20:44-05:14
Penzance	21:05-05:47
Sheffield	20:58-05:23

Weather Eye

Paul Simons

'A change in the weather is sufficient to recreate the world and ourselves," wrote Marcel Proust in *The Guermantes Way*. Change is certainly something that many people would like to see after the long dry summer.

But something very strange is going on in the weather. Last week's heatwave hit a peak of 38.1C at Kew Gardens, the highest temperature of this scorching summer so far, but now conditions have turned much cooler, with temperatures falling by up to 15C and even likely to dip below average.

The blue skies have suddenly turned grey and widespread heavy showers are forecast in parts of the country that have been starved of rain for months.

Once the ground is wet enough, a spectacular resurrection may happen as grass that turned brown and crisp in the drought is revived by fresh rainwater and turns green once again.

It is starting to look like the long drought in much of the UK is on the way out — or is it? One thing that can be said for sure is that the long run of high pressure has given way to low-pressure systems running in from the Atlantic, bringing cooler, wetter conditions.

But even though the outlook for the rest of August is changeable, bouts of high pressure could still return with dry interludes and warm conditions, although the chance of another heatwave is receding.

However, this is far from the end of the drought across much of England and Wales. The ground is now baked so hard that any heavy downpours will run off the surface, possibly leading to flash floods.

What is really needed is a long, sustained period of weeks and even months of light rains that stand some chance of gradually soaking into the earth and penetrating deeper underground.

Ideally, for underground water supplies to be replenished, a wet winter is needed, but if the rains from November onwards are insufficient we could face trouble next year.

Speak directly to one of our forecasters on 09065 777675

8am to 5pm daily (calls are charged at £1.55 plus network extras)

WeatherQuest
weatherquest.co.uk

TIMES Travel Partner

A snapshot of the Hungarian capital's most historic sights, with ample time to explore the lesser-known treasures of the blue Danube towns. Explore Castle Hill, bustling Pest and the world-famous Danube waterfront, before visiting Esztergom's domed Basilica, Visegrád's medieval citadel and charming Szentendre. Choose to complete your Hungarian adventure by visiting the magnificent Lake Balaton, with a lavender farm tour and a scenic cruise.

This captivating short break combines the elegant capital of Budapest with the winding Danube River and three delightful Hungarian

FIVE DAYS NOW FROM £790 per person

CALL TODAY ON 0808 258 7057
thetimes.com/nh-spiritofbudapest
QUOTE TIM

*Save up to 15% applies to select tour bookings made by September 30, 2026 and cannot be applied retrospectively to bookings already confirmed. Offer applies to select tours only and cannot be combined with any other offer. Exclusions apply. Prices shown include discount. Single supplements apply. Prices correct at time of print. Subject to availability and may be withdrawn at any time. These holidays are organised and operated by Newmarket Holidays Ltd, a company wholly independent of News UK. ABTOT 5509. ATOL protected 2325. ABTA V7812. Standard phone charges apply.

Our trusted partner Newmarket HOLIDAYS | ABTOT Member 5509 | ABTA travel with confidence

Sport

All Blacks can win if bold and belligerent

Charlie Morgan looks at how New Zealand can improve their poor recent record against world champions

MORGAN HANCOCK/NATIONS CHAMPIONSHIP/GETTY IMAGES

South Africa v New Zealand
First Test, Johannesburg, Saturday, 4.10pm
TV: Sky Sports Action

New Zealand are dangerous at first phase with a forward or Jordie Barrett, left, at first receiver and Love out the back

After the Stormers worried them, New Zealand's next two warm-up matches have been somewhat unsatisfactory. Dave Rennie's men have been impressive enough, as an aggregate scoreline of 104-19 attests, but caveats riddle their victories over the Sharks and the Bulls.

Fortunately, the first Test against South Africa is just days away. Rennie and tour captain Codie Taylor both stressed on Saturday evening that the Springboks will bring an altogether higher level of intensity. That said, there remains reason to believe the All Blacks can impose themselves on this fascinating series.

FIRST-PHASE SUBTLETY

New Zealand are bidding to improve a record of just one win in their past six meetings with South Africa. It has been a sobering sequence, even if three of the five defeats — including the 2023 World Cup final — have been decided by fewer than seven points.

The last time the All Blacks did triumph over their greatest rivals was at Eden Park in September 2025, a victory indebted to two first-phase tries. Emoni Narawa slipped past Willie le Roux and sold a dummy to score from a Beauden Barrett kick-pass before a smart lineout play unpicked the Springboks. Codie Taylor threw directly over the top of the set piece to find Wallace Sititi, who fixed a defender and lifted an inside pass. Will Jordan, ghosting into the line, was given a one-on-one against Malcolm Marx and slipped through.

Striking quickly and cleanly is the best way to avoid being overwhelmed by a swarming defence. And, over the past fortnight or so on South African soil, we have seen New Zealand refining patterns designed to combat the Springboks' aggressive press. These days, just about every team in the world will use a move that posts one centre at first receiver with the second centre cutting a short angle as the fly half and the blind-side wing sit deeper before arcing around these two team-mates together. Often, the centre throws a pull-back behind their midfield partner to the fly half, who can open up the pitch with three back-three players.

Against the Sharks in a drenched Durban, from a scrum on their own ten-metre line, the All Blacks appeared to be preparing for this with Jordie Barrett stationed at first receiver and Ruben Love working around his Hurricanes colleague. That would have put the Sharks on alert for some expansive ball movement to New Zealand's left flank. Instead of a pull-back, though, Barrett speared a diagonal kick into space. Fehi Fineanganofo had loitered on the right of the initial scrum, meaning that Zekhethelo Siyaya, the Sharks full back, could not sweep behind his front line until the ball had been passed away. Barrett's kick skidded off the surface into a horribly awkward area and allowed the All Blacks to exert pressure. First-phase creativity also laid on their opening try against the Bulls. Early on, New Zealand used two "bounce-out" plays, with Peter Lakai moving away to launch Anton Segner as a carrier towards the "seam" of the defence (the inside shoulder of the first defender that is back ten metres). Segner is deceptively powerful and can punch holes.

South Africa will do a far better job of shutting down New Zealand's space — Jesse Kriel will take it as a personal affront if they are allowed to string together three passes before being suffocated — but, with the firepower the All Blacks possess, it only takes one misjudged defensive read or an unfortunate slip to turn these creative moves into seven points.

Rennie wants "optimistic" decision-making from his side. We can expect New Zealand to run restarts out of their own 22 occasionally. Three other characteristics of their attack include wings roaming across to the other side of the field, playmakers at No10, No12 and No15 and forwards such as Tupou Vaa'i holding width. But attack coach Mike Blair will also have been devising an arsenal of intricate strike moves to tease the Springboks out of shape and sting them.

A BURLY BACK FIVE

South Africa have developed into a multi-dimensional team capable of beating opponents in various ways. Still, they will continue to impose themselves in the aerial exchanges and at the scrum and maul. New refereeing directives in the latter should ensure that they will ruthlessly drive home any advantage. As for the scrum, the All Blacks need six front-row forwards ready for an almighty battle.

Two selection hallmarks of the Rennie era so far have been brawny locks and more bulk in the back row. Luke Jacobson's presence at open-side flanker has been a signpost to this, as has the inclusion of Ethan Blackadder. New Zealand's phalanx of second rows will be critical, both in the set-piece tussle and on the gainline.

Fabian Holland's return to fitness has been a significant boost, while Josh Lord is establishing himself well and Patrick Tuipulotu combines heft and dynamism. Sam Darry has been excellent recently and Vaa'i has shifted to blind-side flanker. New Zealand have combined their flowing phase attack with tough stuff around the fringes, powerful pick-and-gos and narrow interplay.

The All Blacks have been highly abrasive at the ruck, which is the only way forward against the Springboks. Watch out for Rennie's bench make-up. Expect a five-three split with a centre in the No22 shirt, but four locks including Vaa'i in the 23 seems prudent given how the Springboks can dominate the final quarter with scrummaging and mauling.

FAMILIAR FACES TO BOLSTER ROOKIES

Injuries are mounting up for New Zealand. George Bell, Billy Proctor, Caleb Clarke and Ollie Norris have already returned home and Cortez Ratima is nursing a knee issue. To reintegrate Taylor and Ardie Savea, as well as Richie Mo'unga will have been immensely reassuring.

Savea, the permanent captain, leads by example with moments that alter impetus in matches. Rennie has confirmed that Mo'unga will not start in Johannesburg on Saturday and it would be a shock if Love, Jordie Barrett and Quinn Tupaea do not join forces as a 10-12-13 trio. Love, however, will be far better for having senior figures such as Mo'unga, Beauden Barrett and Damian McKenzie to instil him with confidence. For the All Blacks to prevail, they must be bold as well as belligerent.

‘There needs to be change’ – Scottish FA will not back Infantino

Football
Michael Grant Scottish Football Correspondent

The Scottish Football Association has lost confidence in Gianni Infantino and has confirmed it will not vote for him to be re-elected as Fifa’s president in 2027.

The SFA’s chief executive, Ian Maxwell, said he would also be in favour of checks being introduced to prevent the role at the helm of football’s global governing body becoming too powerful.

Infantino has come under worldwide pressure after his failed attempt to win support for selling stakes in the World Cup and other Fifa commercial operations to a private investment company.

The plot was revealed by The Times and created outrage throughout football. Uefa condemned the scheme, said it had no confidence in Infantino, and threatened to boycott Fifa competitions. The English, Welsh and Irish FAs have all officially withdrawn support for Infantino. Nevertheless, the 56-year-old is still expected to stand for re-election in March and may have enough support to win again.

“Uefa put out their statement and we said we were fully behind their position. And that absolutely remains the case,” Maxwell said. “We can’t say we’ve lost confidence in someone and then even consider re-electing someone in due course. So we won’t be voting for him.”

When asked if he would be in favour of checks being put in place to limit any Fifa president’s individual power, Maxwell said: “Absolutely. Fifa is effectively a grander version of us as an association. We have member clubs and they expect things from their chief executive and their president and there is a way to behave.”

Chepstow
Rob Wright

2.15 Hope Rising
2.45 Soeur De Flash
3.15 Grove Street
3.50 Law Of Design
4.25 Von Trotter
5.00 Arnaz

Going: good to firm
Draw: no advantage — **Sky Sports Racing**

2.15 Handicap (£3,454: 1m 4f) (2)
1 (2) 0/411 **HOPE RISING** 7 (D) J Snowden 5-9-9 **R Hornby**
2 (1) 10503 **SNEAKY BLINDER** 50 (P,D) R Stephens 5-9-4 **B Loughnane**

1-12 Hope Rising, 7-1 Sneaky Blinder.

Wright’s choice: Hope Rising made all the running to win by 19 lengths at Nottingham; difficult to oppose here

2.45 Maiden Fillies’ Stakes (2-Y-O: £5,400: 5f) (8)
1 (1) 022 **DELIGHFULLY HOT** 25 James Owen 9-2 **B Loughnane**
2 (2) 04 **HAPPY ENOUGH** 28 R Beckett 9-2 **E Greatrex**
3 (3) **IMPULSIVE SPIRIT** P Evans 9-2 **R Hornby**
4 (7) 2 **KOKUMI** 35 Dr R Newland 9-2 **G Mangan**
5 (6) 3 **MARZAD** 12 B Millman 9-2 **L Edmunds**
6 (4) 2 **ROGUE DAKOTA** 12 A Watson 9-2 **H Davies**
7 (5) 3 **SIOUX MOON** 20 C Fellowes 9-2 **T Marquand**
8 (8) 3 **SOEUR DE FLASH** 29 (T) C Cox 9-2 **Rossa Ryan**

2-1 Delighfully Hot, 10-3 Soeur De Flash, 11-2 Rogue Dakota, Sioux Moon, 7-1 Kokumi, 12-1 Impulsive Spirit, 14-1 Happy Enough, 33-1 Marzad.

Wright choice: Soeur De Flash can build on a promising third at Windsor **Dangers** Sioux Moon, Delighfully Hot

3.15 Maiden Stakes (2-Y-O: £7,020: 7f) (6)
1 (5) 426 **AVIONICS** 14 A Balding 9-7 **T Marquand**
2 (1) 2 **GROVE STREET** 20 B Meehan 9-7 **J Leavy**
3 (2) **HIGHLAND FROST** J Portman 9-7 **R Hornby**
4 (6) 50 **IT’S A DREAM** 64 D F Davis 9-7 **B Ffrench-Davis (5)**
5 (4) **TALAMON** G Boughey 9-7 **B Loughnane**
6 (3) 0 **LA BASSETTE** 19 C Cox 9-2 **Rossa Ryan**

13-8 Grove Street, 9-4 Talamon, 10-3 Avionics, 7-1 La Bassette, 25-1 Highland Frost, It’s A Dream.

Wright choice: Grove Street was a close second to a subsequent winner at Sandown Park **Danger** Rogue Exile

3.50 Handicap (£3,454: 1m) (8)
1 (7) 05055 **LAW OF DESIGN** 24 (P) I Williams 4-9-9 **B Loughnane**
2 (8) -0430 **LOOK BACK SMILING** 28 (P,D) N Mulholland 6-9-9 **T Marquand**
3 (3) -4000 **COUNTING CARDS** 35 E De Giles 4-9-8 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
4 (2) 15535 **RATING** 25 (P,D) G Harris 5-9-6 **Rossa Ryan**
5 (1) 00662 **RISEN AGAIN** 16 (P) J & R Flint 5-9-4 **W Carson**
6 (6) 01300 **BOBBY DASSLER** 21 (CD) B J Murphy (Ire) 7-8-12 **Mason Paetel (5)**
7 (4) 56535 **AJRAD** 9 (P,CD) B Millman 8-8-11 **L Edmunds**
8 (5) 13226 **SCARFO** 9 (CD) B J Llewellyn & Robert Williams 5-8-7 **Zoe Lewis (7)**

3-1 Rating, 9-2 Risen Again, 5-1 Ajrad, 11-2 Scarfo, Look Back Smiling, 15-2 Law Of Design, 10-1 Bobby Dassler, 20-1 Counting Cards.

Wright choice: Law Of Design drops in class after struggling at Chester **Dangers** Risen Again, Ajrad

4.25 Handicap (£4,187: 7f) (7)
1 (1) 6-055 **EVIE ROSS** 46 (V,C) C Cox 3-9-9 **Rossa Ryan**
2 (2) 21 **ROGUE EXILE** 17 (D) James Owen 3-9-8 **H Davies**
3 (5) 13351 **ESPONA BAY** 12 (CD) S Dixon 3-9-5 **K O’Neill**
4 (4) 40104 **NAME THE DAY** 21 (CD) E J-Houghton 3-9-5 **O Carmichael (7)**
5 (3) 00621 **VON TROTTER** 17 (D) M & D Easterby 3-9-2 **Joanna Mason**
6 (7) 50431 **HONKY TONK GIRL** 18 Oliver Cole 3-8-12 **B Loughnane**
7 (6) 44103 **TOO MUCH TREVOR** 9 (CD) G Harris 5-8-10 **Ashley Lewis (3)**

9-4 Rogue Exile, 11-4 Honky Tonk Girl, 5-1 Espona Bay, Von Trotter, 6-1 Evie Ross, 12-1 Too Much Trevor, 33-1 Name The Day.

Wright choice: Von Trotter improved on his first try at this trip when winning at Doncaster **Danger** Rogue Exile

5.00 Handicap (£3,454: 6f) (10)
1 (5) 23126 **SAVANNAH SMILES** 25 (P,CD) G Harris 6-9-9 **Harry Vigors (5)**
2 (3) 45006 **LE BEAU GARCON** 13 M & D Easterby 7-9-9 **Joanna Mason**
3 (7) 02444 **CONNIE’S ROSE** 18 (P,T,CD) G Harris 7-9-8 **Rossa Ryan**
4 (10) -4000 **ZOULU WARRIOR** 33 (P,C,D) H Main 4-9-8 **L Edmunds**
5 (9) 15-51 **CALAFRIO** 20 (P,T,D) G Baker 5-9-8 **B Sayette**
6 (1) 42301 **BENAVENTE** 144 G Brown 8-9-4 **N Currie**
7 (4) 0-046 **VAPE** 33 (P,CD) J & R Flint 9-9-2 **Charlie Tucker (7)**
8 (8) 00001 **ARNAZ** 9 (CD) M Loughnane 5-8-13 **B Loughnane**
9 (2) 56152 **MARISITTA** 9 (P,CD) J G O’Shea 6-8-9 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
10 (6) 43303 **SOME NIGHTMARE** 9 (P,CD) J G O’Shea 9-8-8 **G Mangan**

3-1 Calafrio, 5-1 Arnaz, 6-1 Connie’s Rose, Savannah Smiles, 7-1 Marisitta, 8-1 Some Nightmare, Benavente, 14-1 Le Beau Garcon.

Wright choice: Arnaz escapes a penalty for his easy win here nine days ago **Dangers** Spme Nightmare, Connie’s Rose

Lingfield Park
Rob Wright

2.30 Diamond Bay (nb)
3.00 Romotoso
3.33 Douglas Dc
4.08 My Old Mate
4.45 Zaltalla
5.20 Megaphone
5.52 Alashos
6.22 Chasing Gold

Going: standard
Draw: 5f-1m, low best — **Sky Sports Racing**

2.30 Handicap (£4,172: 2m) (8)
1 (4) 26364 **CIRCUIT BREAKER** 64 (D) J & A O’Neill 6-11-2 **Mr Simon Walker**
2 (6) 0030/ **BENVOY** J124 (T) Miss J Davis 5-11-0 **Miss B Hampson**
3 (5) 51034 **ROLAND GARROS** 6 (P,T) Hayley Burton 5-11-0 **Mr F Yarham**
4 (3) 354-0 **WISE COUNSELLOR** J56 (P) G & J Moore 4-11-0 **Mr Hezekiah March (7)**
5 (7) 60542 **DIAMOND BAY** 26 (B,CD) T Ward 8-10-12 **Mr Henry Callan**
6 (8) 5/10- **FLAMINGO ROSE** 401 (T,D) M Wigham 9-10-6 **Mr Morgan Tidman (7)**
7 (2) 14405 **FURTHER MEASURE** 22 (P,CD) M Murphy 9-10-6 **Miss Charlotte Owen (7)**
8 (1) 00434 **BEAUNE** 14 (P,C) B J Llewellyn & Robert Williams 4-10-2 **Miss Jessica Llewellyn (5)**

2-1 Circuit Breaker, 3-1 Diamond Bay, 6-1 Beaune, 7-1 Roland Garros, 10-1 Further Measure, Benvoy, 12-1 Flamingo Rose, 16-1 Wise Counsellor.

3.00 Maiden Fillies’ Stakes (2-Y-O: £5,400: 6f) (10)
1 (3) **ENRICHED** Tom Clover 9-2 **C Fallon**
2 (6) 400 **IT’SBEENEMOTIONAL** 54 Mrs L Mongan 9-2 **Georgia Dobie**
3 (1) 53045 **LAST DANDELION** 24 S C Williams 9-2 **M Ghiani**
4 (5) 03 **MUSICAL FORCE** 28 Harry Eustace 9-2 **D Probert**
5 (4) 0 **MYSTIC UNICORN** 14 Michael Keady 9-2 **D Keenan**
6 (7) 4 **NIGHTSPELL** 34 R Burdon 9-2 **J Mitchell**
7 (8) 02320 **PAST PASSION** 31 J Portman 9-2 **T Heard**
8 (10) 000 **PERTINENT** 31 M Fenton (Ire) 9-2 **Grace McEntee**
9 (9) 5 **POLLY THE SNIPER** 15 T Dascombe 9-2 **W Cox**
10 (2) 3 **ROMOTOSO** 17 W Knight 9-2 **Taylor Fisher**

11-8 Romotoso, 5-1 Past Passion, 6-1 Musical Force, 8-1 Last Dandelion, 10-1 Enriched, 12-1 It’sbeenemotional, Polly The Sniper, 16-1 Nightspell.

3.33 Classified Stakes (£3,454: 1m 4f) (10)
1 (6) 00321 **FOINIX** 7 (B,CD) J & S Best 6-10-0 **F Marsh**
2 (7) 25300 **CHARLES MORIN** 36 (B) P Phelan 5-9-9 **P Bradley**
3 (10) 00552 **DOUGLAS DC** 14 (B) A Carroll 8-9-9 **M Ghiani**
4 (5) 06002 **FIGHTING POET** 7 (B,D) R Phillips 8-9-9 **J Peate**
5 (8) 10044 **PRIDE EYE** 21 (T) M Rimell 4-9-9 **C Hutchinson**
6 (4) 10/55 **SNOOKER MCCREW** 28 (C) M Comley 5-9-9 **A Redman (7)**
7 (3) 36-00 **SOMEONE’S WISH** 71 (P,C) P Morris 6-9-9 **R Kavanagh (3)**
8 (1) 04000 **SUMMER EVENING** 7 (T) D Flood 4-9-9 **T Heard**
9 (2) 6-435 **CHURCHILL’S SPIRIT** 21 (P) Tom Clover 3-9-0 **J Mitchell**
10 (9) 405 **STAR SUEPREME** 22 Lemos Souza 3-9-0 **D Keenan**

3-1 Foinix, 5-1 Snooker McCrew, 11-2 Pride Eye, 6-1 Charles Morin, 7-1 Douglas Dc, 8-1 Fighting Poet, 10-1 Star Suepreme, 14-1 Someone’s Wish.

4.08 Handicap (3-Y-O: £3,768: 1m) (7)
1 (1) 00211 **MY OLD MATE** 8 (D) G & J Moore 10-0(6ex) **Jude Fernandes (7)**
2 (2) 0-440 **VENTURING** 14 A Carroll 9-9 **W Cox**
3 (7) 54-55 **PERFECT RULER** 92 (BF) M Botti 9-9 **M Ghiani**
4 (5) 21305 **GREY SANDS** 57 (P,T,D) K Bailey & M Nicholls 9-6 **A Redman (7)**
5 (6) 400-0 **TEN CUIDADO** 41 M Usher 9-5 **F Marsh**
6 (3) -0021 **HENFIELD** 36 (P,CD) K Jewell 9-0 **D Probert**
7 (4) 60455 **ERNIE MCCREW** 12 J S Moore 8-12 **Millie Wonnacott (5)**

10-11 My Old Mate, 7-2 Perfect Ruler, 4-1 Henfield, 10-1 Ernie Mccrew, 12-1 Grey Sands, 50-1 Venturing, 66-1 Ten Cuidado.

4.45 Classified Stakes (£3,454: 7f) (12)
1 (12) -0000 **COILED** 13 M Rimell 4-9-9 **C Hutchinson**
2 (8) 06054 **EDERGOLE’S GIFT** 10 (B,T,CD) C Allen 5-9-9 **C Fallon**
3 (11) 400-0 **HOLD THE PRESS** 187 (CD) J R Jenkins 7-9-9 **M Ghiani**
4 (3) 14000 **MAURY** 42 (CD) Craig Benton 4-9-9 **Georgia Dobie**
5 (4) 06400 **MIRAFLORES** 13 R Cook & J Bridger 4-9-9 **Taylor Fisher**
6 (6) 63005 **RAQRAAQ** 36 (B,C) P Chamings 8-9-9 **D Probert**
7 (7) 05053 **TURPIN** 21 (V) J Boyle 4-9-9 **L Catton (3)**
8 (1) 00336 **VICTORY SOUND** 35 (D) M Usher 4-9-9 **R Clutterbuck**
9 (10) 40233 **ZALTALLA** 5 (BF,CD) G & J Moore 5-9-9 **T P Queally**
10 (9) 60530 **DORA VITA** 15 R Phillips 3-9-4 **J Peate**
11 (2) 26300 **MADEMOISELLE BELLE** 28 (P) M Comley 3-9-4 **F Marsh**
12 (5) 45205 **SHE’S CRAFTY** 49 G Margarson 3-9-4 **J Mitchell**

9-4 Zaltalla, 9-2 Turpin, 6-1 Victory Sound, 7-1 Edergole’s Gift, 8-1 She’s Crafty, 10-1 Mademoiselle Belle, Raqraaq, 12-1 Maury.

5.20 Classified Stakes (£3,454: 7f) (11)
1 (10) 60345 **CHLOE’S COURAGE** 11 (P,D) J Ryan 4-9-9 **D Keenan**
2 (11) 0-000 **DUPONT CIRCLE** 57 (B) Craig Benton 4-9-9 **Georgia Dobie**
3 (4) 40060 **HORUS** 10 (P,T,C) M Attwater 4-9-9 **J Glennon (7)**
4 (8) 34005 **MEGAPHONE** 19 S Dixon 4-9-9 **C Howarth (3)**
5 (9) 0-020 **NO NEWS** 18 (B,D) J R Jenkins 6-9-9 **J Peate**
6 (7) 06066 **REGAL GUEST** 16 G Margarson 4-9-9 **J Mitchell**
7 (1) 05222 **ROVINIA** 13 (D) R Teal 4-9-9 **M Ghiani**
8 (3) 05100 **VITALLINE** 14 (T,V,CD) Kieran Burke 8-9-9 **Josephine Gordon**
9 (6) 43004 **CROWN THE FUTURE** 28 (D) A Carroll 3-9-4 **Myla Coppins (5)**
10 (2) 5-560 **POWER CUT** 42 (BF) C Banham 3-9-4 **J Haynes**
11 (5) 00656 **RUIZ** 17 (H) S Dow 3-9-4 **P Bradley**

7-4 Rovinia, 4-1 Megaphone, 6-1 Chloe’s Courage, 8-1 Crown The Future, 10-1 Power Cut, Vitalline, 12-1 Regal Guest, 14-1 No News.

5.52 Handicap (£4,711: 6f) (10)
1 (10) 63060 **DIAMOND DREAMER** 47 (B,CD) P Chamings 6-9-9 **D Probert**
2 (3) 63000 **EXPRESS TRAIN** 14 (D) R Phillips 4-9-9 **J Peate**
3 (5) 40611 **HAPPIER** 6 (D) M Keighley 6-9-9(5ex) **Toby Moore (7)**
4 (8) 23536 **PEREGRINE FALCON** 18 P Morris 4-9-8 **R Kavanagh (3)**
5 (9) -1006 **BIG BARD** 69 (P,CD) G & J Moore 8-9-7 **Jude Fernandes (7)**
6 (1) 06404 **BALON D’OR** 14 (P,D) S Dow 5-9-7 **P Bradley**
7 (7) 40140 **ALASHOS** 57 (P,CD) C Gordon 4-9-6 **C Bishop**
8 (2) 00062 **DUE DATE** 45 (V,D) C Wallis 6-9-5 **Jason Watson**
9 (4) 05040 **DASHING DONKEY** 19 W Stone 5-9-4 **J Mitchell**
10 (6) 45455 **PORFIN** 5 (P,CD) P McEntee 8-8-9 **Grace McEntee**

11-4 Happier, 9-2 Balon D’or, 5-1 Due Date, 7-1 Alashos, 8-1 Diamond Dreamer, 10-1 Dashing Donkey, 14-1 others.

6.22 Handicap (£4,711: 6f) (9)
1 (5) 20030 **WOOLRIDGE** 59 (P) S Dixon 4-9-9 **T Heard**
2 (2) 10006 **TWILIGHT MADNESS** 14 (CD) S Hodgson 8-9-9 **W Carver**
3 (4) -U142 **CHASING GOLD** 26 (B,D) Michael Keady 4-9-8 **Taylor Fisher**
4 (3) 53101 **WALKING ON CLOUDS** 42 (B,CD) C Banham 7-9-7 **J Haynes**
5 (9) -0560 **MY MATE KEV** 91 (W,BF,D) C Dwyer 4-9-7 **M Ghiani**
6 (8) 00106 **COURT OF SESSION** 68 (V,C,D) P McEntee 7-9-7 **C Fallon**
7 (1) 23162 **VON KROLOCK** 20 (B,D) James Owen 7-9-5 **C Howarth (3)**
8 (7) 30-00 **UNICO** 70 (P,D) C Gordon 5-9-4 **C Bishop**
9 (6) 00003 **HENRY TUDOR** 10 (D) M Hoad 4-8-9 **C Hutchinson**

3-1 Walking On Clouds, 4-1 Chasing Gold, 9-2 My Mate Kev, 6-1 Von Krolock, 7-1 Twilight Madness, 8-1 Court Of Session, 12-1 others.

Wolverhampton
Rob Wright

5.30 Saifo
6.00 Maliqui
6.30 Spaceman (nap)
7.00 Samra Star
7.30 Sargent Dennis
8.00 Kakirra

Going: standard
Draw: 5f-7f, low best — **Sky Sports Racing**

5.30 Restricted Maiden Stakes (£5,400: 1m 1f 104yd) (6)
1 (1) 3 **FRANSCHHOEK** 146 J Fanshawe 3-9-7 **Kaiya Fraser**
2 (2) 0 **SAIFO** 40 D M Simcock 3-9-7 **S De Sousa**
3 (3) 4 **STATE EXPRESS** 13 S Woods 3-9-5 **L Morris**
4 (4) 2- **WHY NOT ME** 264 S C Williams 4-9-5 **O Murphy**
5 (6) 0 **ASTRID** 120 (W) James Horton 3-9-0 **R Havlin**
6 (5) 00- **SUESHINE** 339 (P) Kathy Turner 3-9-0 **C Lee**

11-10 Franschhoek, 2-1 Why Not Me, 11-2 Saifo, 10-1 Astrid, 16-1 State Express, 66-1 Sueshine.

6.00 Restricted Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £5,400: 7f) (12)
1 (11) 0 **ARLECCHINO’S MOON** 50 M Usher 9-7 **R Havlin**
2 (3) 0 **BACKMEIFYOUCAN** 26 I Furtado 9-7 **H Crouch**
3 (9) **DARK DETECTIVE** 0 Greenall & J Guerriero 9-7 **H Russell**
4 (5) 4 **JAVELOT** 16 M Botti 9-7 **S De Sousa**
5 (6) 6 **L B DOUBLE U** 26 T Dascombe 9-7 **P-L Jamin**
6 (8) **MALIQUI** C Fellowes 9-7 **O Murphy**
7 (4) 5 **PEABERRY** 22 T Ward 9-7 **S M Levey**
8 (1) 0 **SPES DURAT AVORUM** 16 Jack Morland 9-7 **C Shepherd**
9 (12) 0 **WITHOUT FAIL** 8 M Bell 9-7 **J Bradnam (7)**
10 (10) 00 **BRAZILIAN BLITZ** 22 I Furtado 9-4 **R P Downey**
11 (2) 0 **APRIL’S LUCK** 8 D Cunha 9-2 **S Donohoe**
12 (7) 05 **CHAISE LONGUE** 10 E Dunlop 9-2 **J Callan**

15-8 Maliqui, 3-1 Peaberry, 7-2 Javelot, 5-1 L B Double U, 16-1 Backmeifyoucan, 20-1 Chaise Longue, Dark Detective, 33-1 Without Fail.

6.30 Handicap (£5,234: 7f) (10)
1 (5) 06261 **PERCY’S LAD** 6 (D) D & C Kubler 8-10-5(4ex) **Ebrahim Nader**
2 (2) /060- **NAEPOINT** 332 R & P Fahey 5-10-0 **W Fentiman (3)**
3 (10) 21-43 **HAADERR** 17 (T,D) E Bethell 3-9-8 **D Tudhope**
4 (3) 000-0 **HAVANAGREATTIME** 19 (D) R Carr 5-9-7 **JP Sullivan**
5 (9) -5402 **INSIDE STORY** 18 J Tate 3-9-6 **S De Sousa**
6 (1) 4-040 **PADUA** 22 (T,D) H Morrison 4-9-6 **H Crouch**
7 (7) 12500 **PACKETOFBISCUITS** 110 (B,CD) J Mackie 4-9-4 **L Morris**
8 (4) -0220 **HE’S A GENTLEMAN** 38 (V,CD) H Palmer 7-9-3 **O Murphy**
9 (8) 2-313 **SPACEMAN** 22 (C) R & P Fahey 3-9-0 **Oisin Orr**
10 (6) -0300 **SHAW PARK** 160 (D) S Dixon 7-8-11 **Mikkel Mortensen (5)**

3-1 Percy’s Lad, 7-2 Spaceman, 4-1 Inside Story, 6-1 Haaderr, 10-1 He’s A Gentleman, Padua, 14-1 Packetofbiscuits, 16-1 Naepoint.

7.00 Handicap (£3,978: 1m 1f) (10)
1 (3) 30211 **SAMRA STAR** 11 (H,CD) Miss L Perratt 5-9-13 **O Murphy**
2 (10) 40424 **GLADIADORA** 29 (BF) Charlie Clover 5-9-13 **S Osborne**
3 (7) 35044 **GOLDIE TRICKETT** 32 (BF) J Chapple-Hyam 4-9-10 **David Egan**
4 (4) 444 **KHEPRI** 21 (V) K R Burke 3-9-9 **C Lee**
5 (1) 43622 **BLUE CELESTIAL** 12 J Tate 3-9-8 **S De Sousa**
6 (8) 60-23 **ALBERTINI STAR** 26 A King 3-9-7 **L Morris**
7 (6) 32560 **MIMI’S MAGIC** 22 (V) E Dunlop 3-9-6 **R Havlin**
8 (9) 46604 **SAILOR’S RETURN** 15 (T) D O’Meara 3-9-5 **D Tudhope**
9 (5) -0012 **SUNSHINE AND ROSES** 10 (CD) J Channon 3-9-4 **Rose Dawes (5)**
10 (2) 0-000 **DELEVINGNE DREAM** 31 (P) Harry Eustace 3-9-0 **G Wood**

3-1 Samra Star, 4-1 Blue Celestial, 5-1 Goldie Trickett, 11-2 Gladiadora, 10-1 Khepri, Sunshine And Roses, 12-1 Albertini Star, 14-1 Sailor’s Return.

7.30 Handicap (3-Y-O: £3,978: 6f) (8)
1 (1) -1006 **UP THE AGENDA** 34 (D) Jack Morland 9-9 **C Shepherd**
2 (4) 52416 **PERCY’S STAR** 45 (P) C Dwyer 9-9 **S De Sousa**
3 (2) 06246 **ACCLAIMED FREEDOM** 40 G Scott 9-8 **O Murphy**
4 (5) 52210 **SARGENT DENNIS** 26 (D) J Channon 9-7 **Rose Dawes (5)**
5 (6) 12200 **ARISHKA’S DREAM** 75 (BF,CD) D & C Kubler 9-6 **Ebrahim Nader**
6 (7) 01000 **ESCAPE PLAN** 14 (T,D) T Ward 9-3 **S M Levey**
7 (8) 61455 **FIZZY CRISTAL** 32 (D) R & P Fahey 9-2 **W Fentiman (3)**
8 (3) 3-255 **SOCA STAR** 50 S Spencer 9-2 **D Swift**

7-2 Acclaimed Freedom, 4-1 Sargent Dennis, 5-1 Fizzy Cristal, Arishka’s Dream, 6-1 Percy’s Star, 7-1 Up The Agenda, 12-1 Escape Plan, 14-1 Soca Star.

8.00 Handicap (£3,978: 1m 6f) (9)
1 (6) 0-225 **SO ALEX** 46 (C) Dr R Newland 4-10-2 **Jack Doughty**
2 (1) 11-00 **VELVET WHISPER** 102 E Bethell 4-10-2 **D Tudhope**
3 (4) 32-40 **KINGDOM OF STARS** 8 Kerry Lee 5-10-2 **R Havlin**
4 (7) 50032 **DANCE TIME** 7 (CD) D Loughnane 6-10-0 **Laura Pearson**
5 (3) -0364 **PERCY JONES** 36 (CD) M Loughnane 7-9-13 **L Morris**
6 (9) 256 **WHITE STORM** 35 S & E Crisford 3-9-8 **S De Sousa**
7 (2) -2415 **HEROICS** 45 (D) A King 3-9-7 **O Murphy**
8 (8) 43051 **FLASH KOZO** 22 (D) Harry Eustace 3-9-3 **Kaiya Fraser**
9 (5) 11112 **KAKIRRA** 20 (BF,C) Ollie Sangster 3-9-0 **H Crouch**

3-1 Flash Kozo, 7-2 Kakirra, 6-1 White Storm, 7-1 Velvet Whisper, Heroics, 8-1 Dance Time, So Alex, 14-1 Percy Jones, 33-1 Kingdom Of Stars.

Yesterday’s racing results

Catterick
Going: Good (good to firm in places)

2.15 (1m 4f 13yd) 1, **Stellarmasterpiece** (Miss Becky Smith, 7-2); 2, Star Start (9-2); 3, Austrian Theory (9-4 fav). 7 ran. 1½l, ½l. Micky Hammond.
2.45 (5f 212yd) 1, **Harry’s Pop** (S H James, 2-1 fav); 2, Aura Of Melania (7-2); 3, Cheeky Chesca (13-2). 8 ran. 2l, 1¼l. Dylan Cunha.
3.15 (5f 212yd) 1, **Quercus** (Shane Gray, 12-1); 2, Daytona Lady (11-1); 3, Edmond Halley (9-4 fav). 9 ran. ns, 27½l. Mrs A Duffield.
3.45 (5f) 1, **Star Noir** (Billy Garritty, 10-3); 2, Night Shining (4-7 fav); 3, Top Lad (22-1). 6 ran. 8½l, 27½l. M & D Easterby.
4.15 (5f) 1, **Our Absent Friends** (D Allan, 7-2); 2, Canaria Queen (13-2); 3, Cheerleader (9-1). 11 ran. 4l, 1l. T Davidson.
4.45 (7f 6yd) 1, **Black Storm** (O J Orr, 11-4); 2, Classy Clarets (12-1); 3, Vince Le Prince (11-4). 9 ran. NR: Emerald Army. 1¼l, 1l. K Scott.
Placepot: £42.20 Quadpot: £11.80
Jackpot: £0.00

Lingfield Park
Going: Standard

2.30 (1m 1yd) 1, **Poppy Foxy** (Saffie Osborne, 15-2); 2, Pequenita (10-11); 3, Parading (11-4). 5 ran. 2l, 2l. Charlie Clover.
3.00 (1m 1yd) 1, **Rapide Vega** (Mikey Sheehy, 2-1); 2, Lady Blitzle (200-1); 3, Barbuda Bay (33-1). 10 ran. 2¼l, 1l. A Keatley.
3.30 (1m 7f 169yd) 1, **Regally Blonde** (Saffie Osborne, 33-1); 2, Le Rouge Chinois (13-8); 3, Belle Of Kt (4-7). 5 ran. ½l, ½l. B I Case.
4.00 (6f 1yd) 1, **Veil Of Clouds** (Callum Shepherd, 4-7 fav); 2, Egotistical (5-2); 3, Dark Brunette (9-1). 5 ran. 6l, ½l. S & E Crisford.
4.30 (5f 6yd) 1, **Pure Passion** (Jack Doughty, 1-2 fav); 2, Saeculamation (5-1); 3, Mimime (22-1). 6 ran. ¾l, 2l. S C Williams.
5.00 (1m 2f) 1, **Hove Ranger** (Rhys Clutterbuck, 3-1); 2, Boston Run (5-2 fav); 3, Forca Timao (7-1). 8 ran. nk, nk. G & J Moore.
Placepot: £45.80 Quadpot: £3.60

Windsor
Going: Good to firm

5.20 (5f 21yd) 1, **Thornaby Pearl** (Jake Dickson, 10-3 fav); 2, South Shore (10-3 fav); 3, Sunlit Sea (6-1). 9 ran. hd, 1l. Adrian Nicholls.
5.55 (6f 12yd) 1, **Mithaaly** (Billy Loughnane, 4-9 fav); 2, Arthur Carrot (22-1); 3, Hemustbeanangel (100-1). 11 ran. 47½l, 2¼l. G Boughey.
6.25 (5f 21yd) 1, **Black Velvet Boy** (Jason Hart, 6-1); 2, Magic Effort (12-1); 3, Paper View (4-1). 5 ran. NR: Inca Warrior. ¾l, nk. J & S Quinn.
6.55 (6f 12yd) 1, **Under The Twilight** (Harry Davies, 7-2); 2, Tenbob Tommy (8-1); 3, Lequinto (17-2). 8 ran. NR: Cashbox. hd, hd. M Blake.
7.25 (6f 12yd) 1, **Nzuri** (Rose Dawes, 40-1); 2, Yes Waliim (4-1); 3, Geemann (22-1). 12 ran. 2l, 1l. F Brennan.
7.55 (1m 3f 99yd) 1, **Pershalla** (Cieren Fallon, 4-1); 2, Mister Pretentious (50-1); 3, Highland Harvey (9-4 fav). 9 ran. 1¼l, 17½l. Mrs A J Perrett.
Placepot: £239.10 Quadpot: £239.40

Wolverhampton
Going: Standard

5.10 (7f 36yd) 1, **So Sassy** (Kaiya Fraser, 3-1 fav); 2, Dream Illusion (13-2); 3, Angels’ Share (10-3). 10 ran. 17½l, 1¼l. J R Fanshawe.
5.40 (7f 36yd) 1, **Forest Berry** (L Morris, 9-4); 2, Pon Pon Dalia (5-2); 3, Eagle Storm (13-2). 8 ran. 1l, 6l. Sir Mark Prescott.
6.10 (6f 20yd) 1, **Wondervision** (George Bass, 4-1 fav); 2, Sydney Grace (11-2); 3, Royal Titan (13-2). 10 ran. nk, ½l. J Channon.
6.40 (6f 20yd) 1, **Trust Yourself** (L Morris, 4-1); 2, Rex Regum (3-1); 3, Invincible Isaac (3-1). 8 ran. NR: Sea Palace, Zohar. 17½l, 27½l. J Tate.
7.10 (6f 20yd) 1, **Blue Force** (Cam Hardie, 25-1); 2, Style King (5-2 fav); 3, Dicko The Legend (3-1). 10 ran. ½l, 1¼l. A Brittain.
7.40 (5f 21yd) 1, **Let’s Go Hugo** (Tom Kiely-Marshall, 4-1); 2, Jungle Dance (13-2); 3, Rajeteriat (12-1). 9 ran. 2l, 1½l. Ollie Pears.
8.10 (1m 4f 51yd) 1, **Prince Of Calypso** (D Tudhope, 3-1); 2, James Choice (5-4); 3, Joseph (18-1). 10 ran. NR: Clansman. hd, 1½l. E Bethell.
Placepot: £23.00 Quadpot: £9.20

Results

Football
Championship

Cardiff (0) **1** — **Wrexham** (1) **1**
R Colwill 90+8 — Moore 3
31,421

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
QPR	1	1	0	0	3	1	2	**3**
Millwall	1	1	0	0	2	0	2	**3**
Swansea	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	**3**
West Bromwich	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	**3**
Bolton	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	**3**
Charlton	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	**3**
Middlesbrough	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	**3**
Watford	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	**3**
Blackburn	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	**1**
West Ham	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	**1**
Burnley	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	**1**
Wolverhampton	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	**1**
Wrexham	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	**1**
Cardiff	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	**1**
Birmingham	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	**1**
Sheffield United	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	**1**
Derby	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	**0**
Lincoln	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	**0**
Preston	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	**0**
Norwich	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	**0**
Stoke	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	**0**
Portsmouth	1	0	0	1	1	3	-2	**0**
Bristol City	1	0	0	1	0	2	-2	**0**
***Southampton**	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	**-4**

*Deducted 4pts for breaching league rules

Cricket
First Test: Sri Lanka v India
Galle (third day of five; India won toss): India 462 (116.4 overs); Sri Lanka 284 (79.4 overs; G S Dinusha 100, D P D N Dickwella 80; M J Suthar 4-76).

Golf
US PGA Tour FedEx St Jude Championship
Memphis, Tennessee: Leading final scores (US unless stated; par 70): **263** S Scheffler 68, 61, 68, 66; **271** Kim Si-w (S Kor) 70, 68, 65, 68; **272** S Burns 67, 70, 62, 73; A Noren (Swe) 71, 66, 66, 69; **273** W Clark 69, 66, 70, 68; Im S-j Im (S Kor) 66, 66, 67, 74; **274** L Aaberg (Swe) 68, 65, 74, 67; T Fleetwood (Eng) 66, 68, 68, 72; J Knapp 65, 70, 67, 72; H Matsuyama (Japan) 66, 70, 67, 71; X Schauffele 67, 72, 68, 67; **275** P Cantlay 69, 66, 70, 70; B Cauley 66, 72, 70, 67; N Echavarria (Col) 68, 66, 71, 70; M Fitzpatrick (Eng) 70, 67, 69, 69; Kim J-h (S Kor) 69, 72, 63, 71; K Kitayama 65, 73, 66, 71; A Scott (Aus) 66, 70, 69, 70; **276** P Coody 71, 66, 70, 69; V Hovland (Nor) 68, 64, 72, 72; M McNealy 68, 70, 69, 69; P Rodgers 67, 69, 71, 69; J Spieth 65, 69, 72, 70.

LPGA Tour Standard Portland Classic
Portland, Oregon: Leading final scores (US unless stated; par 72): **266** A Thitikul (Thai) 68, 67, 67, 64; **267** C Wannasaen (Thai) 69, 68, 67, 63; A Yubol (Thai) 66, 66, 68, 67; **271** S Schubert 67, 66, 67, 71; **272** C Boutier (Fr) 69, 67, 70, 66; P Anannarukarn (Thai) 67, 66, 72, 67; An N-r (S Kor) 69, 68, 66, 69; **273** R Zhang 70, 65, 70, 68; S Vinijchaitham (Thai) 67, 70, 70, 66; **274** Lee S-m (S Kor) 72, 68, 67, 67; C Choi (S Kor) 70, 67, 67, 70; M de Roey (Bel) 67, 69, 68, 70; Jeon J-w (S Kor) 67, 71, 66, 70; **275** M Katsu (Japan) 70, 67, 67, 71; N Guseva (Russ) 67, 68, 73, 67; E Hara (Japan) 69, 66, 69, 71; A Chen (Aus) 74, 65, 70, 66; **276** A Lee 70, 68, 73, 65; L Coughlin 70, 68, 71, 67; **277** Choi H-j (S Kor) 66, 67, 72, 72; Y Noh 69, 67, 69, 72; R Yin (China) 69 68, 71, 69; M Metraux (Swit) 68, 67, 75, 67; M Galdiano 65, 71, 70, 71.

Tennis
Cincinnati Open
Men: Second round (17) F Tiafoe (US) bt L Sonego (It) 6-3, 6-4; J Faria (Port) bt (8) B Shelton (US) 6-4, 6-4. **Third round** T A Tirante (Arg) bt M Landaluce (Sp) 7-6(5), 7-6(4), (7) F Cobolli (It) bt (28) A Blockx (Bel) 7-5, 4-6, 7-5. **Women: Second round** (4) C Gauff (US) bt L Samsonova (Russ) 2-6, 6-4, 6-1; (8) E Svitolina (Ukr) bt T Valentova (Cz Rep) 3-6, 7-6(5), 6-0. **Third round** (7) I Swiatek (Pol) bt (29) M Sakkari (Gr) 4-6, 6-1, 6-1; D Parry (Fr) bt L Boisson (Fr) 4-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Fixtures

Football
EFL Trophy (7.0 unless stated)
Northern: Group B Wigan Athletic v Aston Villa. **Group E** Stockport County v Everton. **Southern: Group C** Reading v Wycombe Wanderers. **Group F** Leyton Orient v AFC Wimbledon, Barnet v Arsenal (7.45). **Group G** Northampton v Brighton & Hove Albion.
National League North (7.45): Bedford v Buxton, Brackley v King’s Lynn, Darlington v Chester, Hebburn v Worksop, Hednesford v Southport, Hereford v Radcliffe, Marine v Chorley, Merthyr Town v Telford, Morecambe v South Shields, Oxford City v Harborough, Scarborough v Spennymoor, Spalding v Macclesfield.
National League South (7.45): Totton v Dorking Wanderers, Dover v Tonbridge, Hemel Hempstead v Maidenhead, Horsham v Hampton & Richmond, Maidstone v Folkestone, Slough v Farnham, Torquay v Weston-super-Mare, Walton & Hersham v Dagenham & Redbridge.

Rugby league
Super League Hull KR v Warrington (8.0).

Strain of Pep's divorce and Walker bust-up caught on film

Amazon series features City dressing-room clash and manager informing players about his marital split, writes **Paul Hirst**

Kyle Walker claimed Pep Guardiola never wanted him to captain Manchester City and accused the manager of picking on him during a furious dressing-room bust-up in his penultimate season in charge.

The heated argument was captured by cameras for a new Amazon Prime Video series released tomorrow, which also shows how Guardiola called a full team meeting to tell his squad about his divorce and the toll that the split from his wife of 30 years, Cristina, took on the Catalan, who threatened to quit on several occasions. He left the club at the end of last season, after a trophy-laden decade in charge.

Guardiola's clash with Walker took place after City's 2-0 defeat by Liverpool on December 1, 2024 and accelerated the full back's departure from the club.

After Guardiola admonished Rúben Dias and Walker for losing the ball in the build-up to the penalty that led to Liverpool's second goal at Anfield, the City captain at the time snapped back at his manager, saying: "For f***'s sake. Every f***ing meeting, it's my name. If you keep saying my name every meeting, every f***ing thing, it's going to be impossible … you're going to get a reaction."

His back initially turned to Walker, Guardiola then sighs upon hearing the former England player's first complaint. "You don't understand, Kyle. I'm talking about the concept [of losing possession]," Guardiola says before going on the attack himself.

"Maybe [I highlighted you] because you are captain," Guardiola adds, which clearly hit a nerve with Walker, who was elected captain by his team-mates for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 seasons.

"You didn't want me to be your captain," Walker replies.

Guardiola is a passionate person, but the pressure of his team's poor performances and his divorce — a key theme in the four-part series, *A Beautiful Obsession* — leaves him choked with emotion at the end of the broadside from Walker, which he treats as a sign of dressing-room unrest. "If you've taken it personally, Kyle, I'm sorry, it will be my defeat," Guardiola says, holding back the tears. "If I am a problem, you have to tell me."

Walker started only three more matches and was subsequently loaned to AC Milan for six months before joining Burnley on a permanent deal.

Addressing the players a couple of months after the Anfield argument, Guardiola says he is "incredibly sad" that Walker has left, but adds: "You cannot behave as a captain the way he has done it. You cannot [do that] in the toughest moments in our lives."

City's in-house TV cameras filmed the footage and supplied it to an external company, which part-produced the series for Amazon.

Guardiola's final two years in charge are an emotional rollercoaster. The Catalan struggles to get a tune out of his players, which frustrates him greatly, and he threatens to quit numerous times. After losing at home to Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions League last season, when he made ten changes to his starting XI, Guardiola yelled to a full dressing room: "I want to quit. I'm so tired. I feel so alone."

Guardiola's team selection that night enraged the chairman, Khaldoon Al-Mubarak, usually one of the coach's staunchest supporters. "I'm so angry with him," Al-Mubarak said in a voice note on a senior leadership group on WhatsApp.

Morale was so low during the 2024-25 season that Guardiola's assistant, Manel Estiarte, told the players to cut their manager some slack: "I said to the players, 'Please you have to understand … he's getting a divorce.'"

Guardiola speaks for the first time himself about how he felt about the end of a relationship that lasted 30 years. During a team talk before an away defeat by Juventus in December 2024, he said: "Guys, I want to confess something. I'm f***ing divorced from the most beautiful woman on your planet. Do I love her? Absolutely. Does she love me? Yes. But we lost the passion, for many reasons. Where is your passion? Whatever you do in life, do it with passion. I don't want good players, I want players with passion."

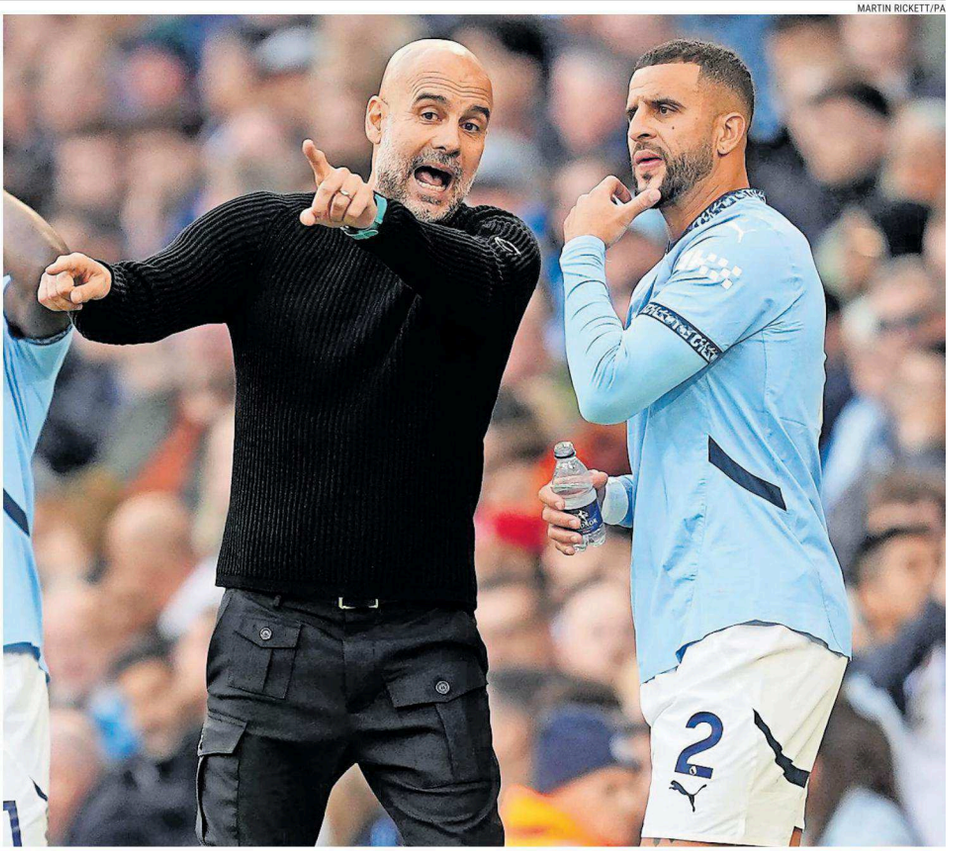
There are more light-hearted moments, such as Noel Gallagher revealing that Guardiola rang him up to lambast him for saying on talkSPORT that City would not catch Arsenal in last season's title race. "Oh, so you don't believe?" Guardiola tells the rock star, who is a City fan.

City finished second to Arsenal in the league but won the FA Cup and Carabao Cup.

The cameras capture boardroom discussions about Guardiola's future and the rebuild of the squad. The series also shows the lengths to which the club go to assess transfer targets — 74 metrics are considered. Interestingly, the personality of Rayan Cherki, whom City signed from Lyon for £34 million in 2025, is described by the chief executive, Ferran Soriano, as "chaotic".

● *A Beautiful Obsession launches on Prime Video in the UK tomorrow*

MARTIN RICKETT/PA



Walker left City soon after a heated exchange with an emotional Guardiola in the City dressing room in December 2024

City hoping to finalise £85 million move for Bouaddi

Manchester City are hoping to complete the transfer of the £85 million-rated Lille midfielder Ayyoub Bouaddi in the next few days after agreeing to sell Rodri to Barcelona (Paul Hirst writes).

Rodri will undergo a medical this morning and City are taking steps to fill the significant void left by the 30-year-old, who will cost the Spanish champions £61 million.

Negotiations with Lille regarding a transfer fee for Bouaddi are ongoing and there is hope a deal can soon be reached for the Morocco international, 18, who has already agreed personal terms with City.

Lille have asked for £85 million for Bouaddi, who was one of the stars of Morocco's World Cup campaign, although the French club are open to receiving some of that fee in add-ons.

Although he likes to play as a defensive midfielder, Bouaddi is not seen as a replacement for Rodri, who is regarded as the best player in the world in his position. That job is likely to fall to Elliot Anderson, the versatile midfielder recruited from Nottingham Forest for £116 million last month.

If they sign Bouaddi, City will give him time to adapt because he is so young and they are expected to recruit another midfielder to spread the load. City would like that to be Enzo Fernández, who is valued by Chelsea at £120 million.

Enzo Maresca, the new City manager, coached Fernández, 25, during their time together at Chelsea and is a big fan of the player.

City are in talks with Tottenham Hotspur over the potential sale of Savinho for £85 million. If Savinho leaves, a replacement winger will be sought. Pedro Neto is available but City will not pay Chelsea's £100 million asking price for the 26-year-old Portuguese.

Rodri spoke to reporters after landing at Barcelona airport last night. "I'm very happy to be here," he said. "To play for Barcelona for me is a dream. We are going to try to win the Champions League and everything else that comes our way."

Goalkeeper at fault as Cardiff have last word in Welsh derby

Cardiff City *R Colwill 90+8*	**1**
Wrexham *Moore 3*	**1**

Sky Bet Championship
Rob Stewart

A mistake from Wrexham's £8 million goalkeeper Anthony Patterson allowed Cardiff City's Rubin Colwill to equalise deep into second-half stoppage time as Welsh bragging rights were shared.

The former Sunderland goalkeeper will be kicking himself for failing to deny Colwill, a substitute, whose free kick from just outside the area in the 98th minute cancelled out a brilliant opening goal from his former Cardiff team-mate Kieffer Moore.

Colwill's effort was sweetly struck but Patterson, who got a hand to it, should have kept it out.

Patterson's team-mates should also take some of the blame because they could have put the contest beyond Cardiff after Moore's early strike.

Colwill rescued a point for Cardiff with a late free kick

The 6ft 5in striker, who recently turned 34, opened the scoring with a sumptuous strike after three minutes.

Renowned in these parts for his power in the air after an 18-month spell leading the Cardiff attack, Moore's less-vaunted shooting skills came to the fore.

He latched onto Danny Imray's lofted pass and from a tight angle thumped a first-time shot beyond Nathan Trott, the Cardiff goalkeeper.

It was quite the way to start the Welsh rivals' first league contest in 24 years.

Moore, a Wales international, cursed himself for not doubling the lead soon after but his glancing header from Lewis O'Brien's inswinging corner brushed the top of Trott's crossbar.

Soon afterwards, Moore picked up a booking for shoving Gabriel Osho, the Cardiff centre back, before Trott came to his side's rescue by pushing away Imray's driven low shot.

Despite struggling to keep up with opponents who finished seventh last season, Brian Barry-Murphy's newly promoted Cardiff side diligently stuck to the task but found Wrexham's counterattacks difficult to cope with.

Wrexham could have gone further ahead but Callum Doyle's shot thudded against Trott's right-hand post. Sam Smith fired a shot straight at Trott and Nathan Broadhead had a chance blocked before Colwill made Wrexham pay for failing to take their chances.

After George Dobson conceded a free kick for a foul on Joel Colwill, his brother Rubin sent the home fans wild.

Barry-Murphy ended up in the referee's book for leaving his technical area during the celebrations.

Will search for transfer value slow Everton's European bid?

Cautious spending leaves Moyes with gaps to fill when others have loosened purse strings, writes **Paul Joyce**

The eyes were not deceiving. Tyler Dibling really was nutmegging rivals and testing the goalkeeper, Thierno Barry was dashing away from defenders and Tyrique George was rounding off a flowing team move that Everton supporters could happily watch on repeat.

The end to the club's pre-season programme, a victory over Newcastle United and Saturday's draw with Champions League qualifiers Lille, who scored a 93rd-minute equaliser, has come with glimpses of much-needed promise to soothe some of the unease that had been building.

In many respects that is a familiar pattern at Everton. Bust to boom or, conversely, boom to bust.

Going into the March international break, David Moyes's side had trampled Chelsea underfoot on a night when Hill Dickinson Stadium rumbled like Goodison Park used to and qualification for Europe appeared within their grasp.

With 135 minutes remaining in the season, Everton had been seventh. They would finish 13th and, despite winning the same number of games as Andoni Iraola's Bournemouth, miss out on European qualification.

Some might characterise that as a near miss, one that would have been avoided had the centre back Jarrad Branthwaite not missed the last five games with injury, for instance. Others would view the failure to win any of their last seven games as proof of more obvious shortcomings, such as a lack of punch in attack.

The Friedkin Group (TFG), which owns Everton, appears to be in the first category. The US conglomerate, headed by the billionaire Dan Friedkin, has sanctioned £60 million of spending thus far on the squad. Merlin Röhl and George, who both spent last season on loan at Everton, have joined permanently, each for £18 million. Arsenal's Christian Norgaard has been signed for £7 million to replace Idrissa Gueye, whose contract expired.

Brennan Johnson has arrived in a swap deal from Crystal Palace, with Dwight McNeil heading in the opposite direction, and Hayden Hackney has signed for £16.5 million from Middlesbrough, where the midfielder was the player of the season in the Championship.

Spending has been focused on extracting value in a difficult market where Leeds United have lavished £40 million on James Trafford, Ipswich Town are spending more than £25 million on Julio Enciso and West Ham United have broken the EFL transfer record by paying a £22 million fee for the Celtic midfielder Arne Engels.

The outward expectation was the expenditure would be heftier at Everton, with officials intimating before the January window that funds would be held back until the summer to implement phase two of the club's revamp. Of course, it is pertinent to remember how that rebuild has progressed during the first 20 months of TFG's ownership. There has been stability after the tumultuous latter years under Farhad Moshiri, a recapitalisation of the business and TFG is intent on following a sustainable financial model.

Across the four transfer windows of its ownership, the total outlay has been about £170 million on 12 players, although 16 — including some loanees who were not retained — have departed.

Moving to Hill Dickinson Stadium and the commercial expansion that will come as a result means that there will be greater scope for investment in the future. Everton's next accounts should show revenue has jumped to about £265 million, from £190 million when they were at Goodison, albeit the turnover of neighbours Liverpool was £703 million in the financial year ending May 2025.

The Premier League's switch to squad-cost ratio rules on spending will still favour the top six.

There is no sense that TFG will deviate from its strategy, as Moshiri routinely did on a whim — such as recruiting Alex Iwobi from Arsenal for £35 million in the final hours of the 2019 summer transfer window to leave the sporting director at the time, Marcel Brands, questioning how they would pay for him.

As ever, September 1 will be the time to judge. By then, a right back will surely have been signed, perhaps Jack Grealish will return on loan from Mancheser City, and maybe there will be other reinforcements.

TFG is hardly prone to public pronouncements (Dan Friedkin has not even been to an Everton game), but explaining this approach would be beneficial to supporters wondering what is the immediate ambition.

It would also help Moyes, who is in the final year of his contract as manager and bore the brunt of the backlash at the end of last season. Supporters have picked up on the fact that he has not spoken in pre-season, perceiving that to be evidence of tension with the hierarchy, but he is the most important person at the club while being entrusted with coaxing consistency from young players and a squad that has gaps in it.

Goals and creativity remain a problem. For all that Barry has displayed signs he has learnt from his first season in England after a £26 million move from Villarreal, when he scored eight goals, there will continue to be moments when the ball bounces off the 23-year-old and everyone looks to the heavens.

Similarly, seeing Dibling, 20, beat opponents served as a reminder of why Everton recruited the winger for £35 million from Southampton 12 months ago, but these are small steps forward that must become something bigger given the addition of another goalscorer could be governed by what interest materialises in Beto. Galatasaray's Baris Alper Yilmaz has been tracked, but Everton were quoted £50 million by Chelsea for Liam Delap, who has scored two goals for the club since they triggered a £30 million clause to sign him from Ipswich.

Hackney, who has yet to play in the Premier League, must also hit the ground running as Norgaard and the ubiquitous James Garner will miss the Premier League opener against Palace on Saturday due to injury.

The clamour for a right back has become slightly farcical with Andy Burnham, the Everton-supporting prime minister, even pleading for an end to the long-running saga. Moyes's first choice, Guéla Doué, was valued at £35 million by Strasbourg and deemed too expensive and it is a similar story with Benfica's Amar Dedic, who is heading to Newcastle.

Djed Spence, now at Inter Milan, Raoul Bellanova and Aaron Wan-Bissaka were considered, and a bid went in for Celtic's Alistair Johnston only for his valuation and injury concerns to complicate the interest. Palace's Daniel Muñoz would be available for between £18 million and £25 million, but is viewed as a wingback, while an inquiry to Fulham for Timothy Castagne was rebuffed.

Yet the notion that a right back will be akin to a silver bullet for Everton is skewed. Röhl, a midfielder, has performed adequately there in some of the warm-up games.

Whatever transpires in the transfer window, additions, as opposed to departures, are paramount.

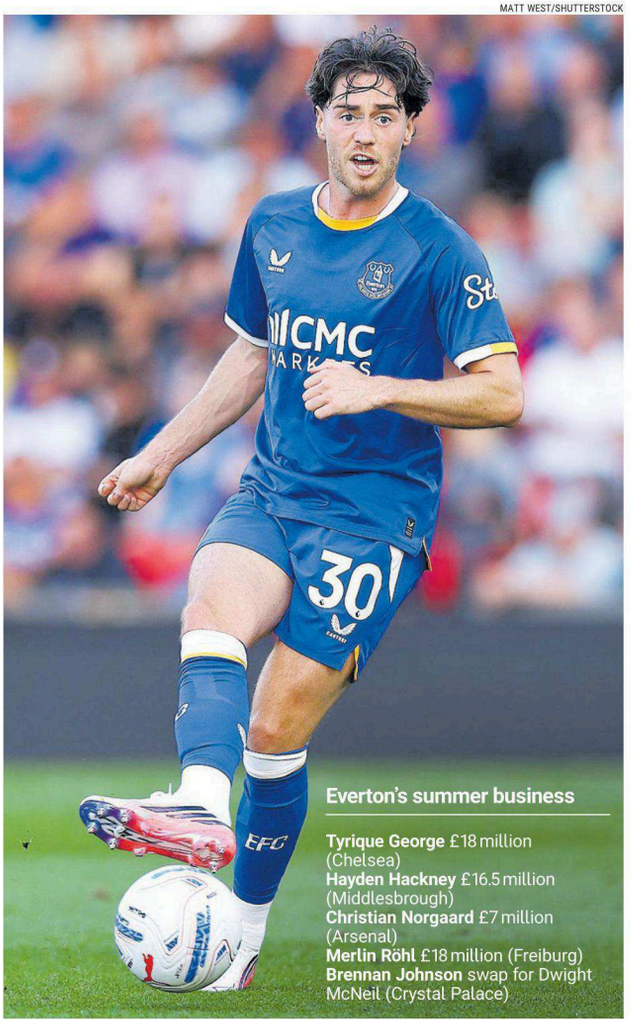
Iliman Ndiaye, whose trickery in the tightest of spaces was evident against Lille, would seem crucial to Everton's hopes, especially if his goal contributions can improve. He has rejected several contracts after the club balked at inserting an exit clause into any new deal that could be triggered by Europe's elite, but Everton hold the aces as the Senegal player has three years remaining on his deal. It would probably take a bid of at least £70 million for there to be an internal discussion on his future — and even then Moyes would not want to sell. Despite mooted interest from Saudi Arabia, nothing has been forthcoming.

Ndiaye is seemingly impatient to play in the Champions League and Everton, too, know the importance of qualifying for Europe given how more targets have slipped through the net because they want continental competition. Sporting Lisbon's Morten Hjulmand was on the club's radar until they were gazumped by Atletico Madrid's courtship of the Denmark midfielder.

With improvement expected from Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur, who finished tenth and 17th respectively last season, the race for Europe will be more congested than ever.

Everton feel like they have moved on from peering over their shoulder but, with the squad not where it needs to be, the next weeks could determine how far they can look up.

MATT WEST/SHUTTERSTOCK



Hackney, who is yet to play in the top flight, is one of Everton's few new faces

Boehly and Walter in sale talks

CONTINUED FROM BACK

and Feliciano are both co-controlling owners of Chelsea along with Boehly, with all three required to sign off major decisions at the club.

Boehly is due to hand over his role as chairman, which is a rotating position, to Clearlake in May next year after five years in the role. Eghbali has become the most notable ownership presence at the club in recent times.

A deal between the partners could resolve long-standing tensions within the ownership consortium, with both Boehly and Clearlake previously open to increasing their shareholdings if the other was willing to sell. The parties have had disagreements over strategy, with Chelsea yet to see any tangible progress regarding the construction of either a new stadium at a site in Earl's Court or the redevelopment of Stamford Bridge, four years on from the takeover. It is this issue that Boehly has previously said could result in the ownership parting ways.

The news of renewed negotiations comes after Walter, the chief executive of Guggenheim Partners, sold the Los Angeles Lakers last week, in a sale reportedly valued at $12.5 billion (about £9.23 billion), to former Disney chief executive Bob Iger and venture capitalist Joshua Kushner.

The sale took place just a year after he acquired the basketball team from the Buss family, and also while US prosecutors probe Walter and his insurance companies. According to the Wall Street Journal, federal prosecutors are examining whether Walter or his other businesses committed fraud by hiding financial ties while borrowing billions of dollars from insurers he controls.

Spokesmen for Boehly and Walter did not immediately respond to requests by The Times for comment. Clearlake Capital has not commented.

United plan to keep hold of Fernandes

Charlotte Duncker

Manchester United intend to reject any offer for their captain, Bruno Fernandes, in the final two weeks of the transfer window.

The Portugal forward is believed to be a target for Turkish side Galatasaray, in addition to having interest from AC Milan and Juventus, but there has been no official bid from any club.

Galatasaray were said to be considering an offer of €50 million in a move that could drastically increase Fernandes's wages but United sources say he is not for sale at any price. There was a £57 million release clause for overseas clubs written into his contract but that expired last month.

Fernandes has entered the final year of his contract, although United have the option to extend it for a further year. The 31-year-old has not suggested to the club that he is looking to leave and said in December that he was "hurt" when United told him he was free to accept an offer to join Saudi Arabian side Al-Hilal last summer. With just two weeks of the window remaining, and head coach Michael Carrick stressing the need for more signings before the deadline, it would also make little sense for the club to sell their captain.

Cox deserves place but lack of foot movement a worry

Steve James

Square pegs in round holes has become a rather tiresome cliché when considering England's Test-match batting order, and the selection of Jordan Cox at No 3 this week, having recently made his Test debut at No 7, appears another invitation to trot out that trope, encouraged even further by Cox's admission that "obviously, it's not my strongest position".

Well, he says that having experienced its rigours in just one first-class match seven years ago, but he has opened 30 times for his previous county, Kent, and indeed made 238 not out from there in 2020. Since moving to Essex for the 2024 season, having been Kent's No 6 and wicketkeeper in 2023, he has mostly batted at No 4. He has not been hiding like some.

There are those who argue that top-class batsmen should be able to bat anywhere in the order — T20 has certainly encouraged that greater flexibility, and four to three should not be an insurmountable leap, even if Joe Root and other greats have made four the prime position rather than three as it was in the days of Viv Richards et al — but the truth is that England's top-order options remain alarmingly limited.

When Emilio Gay had an injury scare recently, a reader commented below the line in these pages: "If he is injured and can't play, I really hope someone who actually opens in county cricket is selected rather than moving someone up to an unfamiliar batting position."

If only it were that simple. Gay and his opening partner, Ben Duckett, bat at No 3 for their counties and the contention that someone such as Dom Sibley has improved sufficiently since his last shot for England falls down when he reverts to type, and eschews the off side, under pressure. Durham's Ben McKinney may come eventually, but that is still some way off. Asa Tribe, of Glamorgan, has not had the season he would have liked, and so otherwise the cupboard is bare.

Jacob Bethell has made a very good fist of the Test No 3 spot without prior experience, averaging 37.71 in his eight Tests there (he batted at No 6 against India at the Kia Oval last year), and Ollie Pope was also thrust there unprepared, actually averaging nearly 40 in 36 Tests (albeit with some easy runs against Ireland and Zimbabwe included).

It is interesting to remember that Jonathan Trott, whose 3,109 Test runs for England at No 3 stand behind only Wally Hammond there, mostly batted at No 4 for Warwickshire (with Ian Bell at No 3). A player much in the news this season for his Hundred riches, Sussex's James Coles, actually reminds me a lot of Trott in the way he plays, working so efficiently to the leg side, even if his closed bat face precludes the power hitting London Spirit required of him in the middle order. He bats at No 5 for Sussex in the County Championship but should consider moving up.

Ideally, of the two players summoned back to the Test squad this week, the more experienced one, Dan Lawrence, should bat at No 3, with the 25-year-old Cox given more time to learn in calmer waters at six after a competent first showing at seven in the second Test against New Zealand, where he scored 27 & 25. But Lawrence's calamitous efforts as an opener two years ago prohibit his going anywhere near the top of the order again, with the selectors doubtless feeling that he deserves a fairer crack this time.

So, with Bethell lame and out of the series, Cox has his chance at No 3 in a tasty reverse of fate after Bethell benefited in New Zealand in 2024 when Cox was slated to be the batsman-wicketkeeper with Jamie Smith on paternity leave. But Cox broke a thumb in the nets and so Pope dropped down from three to keep wicket and in came Bethell at first drop.

Cox, right, prepares for tomorrow's

Cox and Bethell were both with Royal Challengers Bangalore at this year's Indian Premier League, and while there was much chat — notably a tiff between Alastair Cook and Kevin Pietersen — about Bethell not playing much there, it was Cox who was suffering most by not playing at all.

Fortunately for him, soon after his return he made a double century for Essex against Leicestershire, prompting his inclusion against New Zealand and now this opportunity in three Tests to ignite an England career that in ten matches (three one-day internationals, six T20Is and one Test) has disappointingly produced just one fifty.

There is no doubting Cox's supreme talent. He is very much a modern-day hitter; according to coach Andy Flower he strikes the ball as far as anyone in RCB range-hitting practices, standing with bat raised, his bottom hand strong and prominent, often deep in his crease and certainly not moving much.

This latter point was something Justin Langer picked up on when talking recently on the *Stick to Cricket* podcast, bemoaning the standard of batting techniques on both sides in last winter's Ashes. "There's no footwork," he said. "They stand wide and don't move their feet."

Now I happen to think that

Six Nations: Wales vs England 2027

March 5, 2027

Be there for Wales v England at the Principality Stadium, a Guinness Men's Six Nations fixture where history, rivalry and campaign-defining pressure meet.

This exclusive package includes official match tickets and two hosted events with commenter legend Stuart Barnes, The Times's Charlie Morgan and a celebrity guest speaker, for an experience that goes beyond kick-off. With a prime city-centre four-star hotel, you'll also remain close to the stadium, restaurants and post-match debate. Insight before the whistle, atmosphere after it — and every detail handled from start to finish.

Price includes

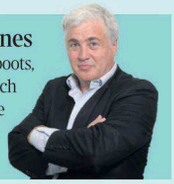
- Two nights' four-star stay at Future Inn Cardiff Bay with breakfast
- Pre-match Q&A with commentator legend Stuart Barnes, The Times's senior rugby writer Charlie Morgan and a celebrity guest
- Captain's Run access on Friday
- Official Cat A ticket (lower tier, try line area)
- Hosted welcome drinks
- Tour merchandise

Optional upgrade:

- Silver Hospitality upgrade for drinks and lunch

Hosted by Stuart Barnes

Since hanging up his fly-half boots, Stuart is a columnist and match analyst for The Times and one of the country's most incisive commentators on rugby.



WRU Gullivers sports travel OFFICIAL SUPPORTER TRAVEL PARTNER

Call 0808 291 4831 or visit thetimes.com/th-sixnations2027

TIMES Holidays

Terms and conditions apply. *Price shown is per person and based on two adults sharing. Single supplement of £360pp applies. Price correct as of July 17, 2026 and subject to change and availability. Price includes all non-optional taxes/fees/charges known at time of publication. This holiday is sold by Times Holidays as an agent for Gullivers Sports Travel and protected under ABTA V832. For full booking conditions, visit thetimes.com/holidays/terms-and-conditions. Guest speakers, hosts, featured talent and itinerary events are subject to confirmation, availability and change, and may be substituted, rescheduled or withdrawn. No refunds or compensation will be issued for changes to the speaker or talent lineup, although this does not affect any statutory rights that cannot lawfully be excluded.

ABTA Travel with confidence ABTA No.P8770

BRADLEY COLLYER/PA

England v Pakistan
First Test, Headingley, starts tomorrow, 11am
TV: Sky Sports Main Event/Cricket

Test at Headingley with England team-mate Lawrence, left. Bethell's injury means Cox will bat at No 3 against Pakistan

Bangladesh win was great for game – but showed England up

Mike Atherton
Chief Cricket Correspondent

"Can Bangladesh avoid Test match humiliation?" The Age in Melbourne wondered, with a one-eyed glint, before the opening Test in Darwin. The answer was a resounding yes: Bangladesh outplayed Australia in every facet of the game, crushing them by nine wickets to register a historic first Test victory in the country in what must be regarded as one of the great upsets of the sport.

The Age's headline was informed not just by standard Aussie tub-thumping, but by context. About to embark on an arduous 12-month stretch including a minimum of 20 Tests, Australia sat top of the World Test Championship (WTC) standings and were on a run of 19 wins from their previous 26 Tests at home over a five-year period, including two resounding Ashes triumphs — though they were emerging from a competitive hiatus. This was their strongest team.

Bangladesh, meanwhile, had been thrashed by an innings in their most recent Test outing by Zimbabwe; they had been pummelled by a Cricket Australia XI in the build-up to the game in Darwin, bowled out in their second innings for 54. They were missing their best fast bowler, the youthful Nahid Rana, and had little experience of the conditions. Test cricket, over five days, is designed to draw out teams' strengths and weaknesses, one reason why such upsets occur with relative infrequency.

Yet the win, while a surprise, was no fluke. They exploited Pat Cummins' generosity at the toss; they exposed the established flaws in the Australian batting line-up; they made merry with the bat, and then put their spinners to work in the second innings.

It was a resounding win, in which they outshone their opponents in all aspects of the game.

It is difficult to know which emotion should dominate: the glee and schadenfreude over the result or the lasting pain and embarrassment from the way England's own ineptitude allowed Australia to paper over the cracks in last winter's Ashes. Part of the meltdown that engulfed England this summer was surely the hangover from that missed opportunity; the failure to exploit both a questionable batting line-up and an ageing attack that failed to make it to the starting line.

Putting both those emotions aside, though, there is a broader point to be made. As a player in the 1990s, the glory of the decade was the range and variety and strength of almost all opponents. For sure, England played Australia and West Indies most frequently — 60 of my 115 Tests were against both these champion sides — but Pakistan and South Africa were also exceptional teams, while India, New Zealand and Sri Lanka were increasingly strong as the decade wore on. Zimbabwe, too, enjoyed their golden age. Results were partly explained by the strength of the opposition.

For a variety of reasons — mostly the impact of the free market and the advance of franchised T20 competitions — that broad competitive strength is less obvious now. Outside of the "big three" — England, Australia and India — series of only two Tests predominate, reducing the format's appeal.

The world Test champions, South Africa, have not played a Test at home since winning the mace at Lord's more than a year ago. As a spectator sport, Test cricket is on life support in the Caribbean and Sri Lanka. Pakistan finished bottom of the previous WTC table and are eighth in this iteration. Zimbabwe are only just emerging from a long hibernation.

England's Test ambitions will always be framed around the Ashes, the series that matters most to supporters. But that doesn't mean the broader picture is unimportant. More and more, England and Australia see their commercial ambitions orbiting around India, but it is a dangerous game to view the cricketing landscape in such a tripartite way.

Australia and England, for example, have played against Bangladesh infrequently. Since Bangladesh's elevation to Test status in 2000, no other major Test-playing nation has faced them less frequently. Australia have played seven Tests against them in that time, England only ten. Darwin was only the third Test Bangladesh have been offered in Australia, and the first since 2003, while next summer's Lord's Test will be Bangladesh's first in England since 2010.

Of course, one understands the issues around scheduling and the fear of uncompetitive series — although few teams have been as uncompetitive in Australia as England of late — but a strong Test game can only truly be so if there is a breadth and variety to the competition. The responsibility cuts both ways: it is for every team to exploit their own resources as efficiently as possible, to develop quality teams, and then for the game as a whole to provide opportunity.

That appeal frames the forthcoming series between England and Pakistan too. In commercial terms the "even" years of Test cricket — which, in other words, means the years that India and Australia (who come in odd-numbered years) don't tour — are more challenging for the ECB. New Zealand have already proved their credentials this summer, though, and now it is for Pakistan to show theirs.

Pakistan haven't won a series here since the glory days of Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis in the mid-1990s, though again their opportunities have been scarce: they have played just five Tests in England in the past decade. Their recent form is poor — 13 defeats in their past 18 Tests over a three-year period — and they sit below England in the WTC table.

Test cricket would benefit greatly from strength across the board and the hope, therefore, must be for a competitive and high-quality series above all.

'I thought Test career was over but Kohli's words gave me hope'

Jordan Cox has revealed how a pep talk from from his Royal Challengers Bangalore team-mate Virat Kohli helped him deal with the heartbreak of missing out on his Test debut because of injury (Elizabeth Ammon writes).

Cox, the new England No 3, was on the verge of a Test debut in late 2024, only to fracture a thumb before the series opener in New Zealand.

"It felt like that was the end, as bad as that sounds," Cox said. "I remember talking to Virat about it. He said that there are billions of people who don't even know who I am and that the sun will come up in the morning.

"He's someone that I'll text if I'm feeling down or need a bit of help. He's always at the end of the phone."

England will name their team for the first Test of the post-Bazball era after training this morning, with Marcus Trescothick coaching the side for this series before Stephen Fleming takes charge.

Pakistan are sweating on the fitness of Babar Azam, their captain, as he recovers from a finger injury.

footwork can be a little overrated — particularly that age-old command to "get your foot to the pitch of the ball" — because decisive head movement and balance will naturally produce a good, solid position from which to swing the bat. However, you do have to move, if only a little, to transfer weight into the stroke and be able to combat any movement of the ball. And that is my biggest concern about Cox at the top of the order in Test cricket.

His first-innings dismissal against New Zealand, clipping tamely to mid-wicket, was an example of the dangers of being static. Sometimes when he plays a shorter ball he does not move at all. Perhaps that is why there is a school of thought that bouncers can be his undoing, but the same could also be applied to Harry Brook, and anyway Pakistan do not appear to have too much extreme pace in their squad.

A quite brilliant fielder as well as a decent keeper, Cox is a confident and feisty character, unafraid to upset the apple cart, as he did when leaving Kent — where he was born and came through the county's pathway and academy cricket — for Essex, where he had attended Felsted School and had found a coach in former England batsman Jason Gallian, whom he still sees now.

Those who know him say Cox has matured a lot, and that is reflected in his batting. He may be a hitter who has roamed the T20 franchise circuit — his experience in the Pakistan Super League will stand him in good stead this week when contemplating the opposition bowlers — but he usually takes time to get in, rather like Bethell has also done in Test cricket in fairness, in stark contrast to the likes of Zak Crawley, Duckett and Pope.

Cox was certainly in no rush on Test debut, taking eight and 15 balls respectively to get off the mark in those two innings.

Since moving to Essex he has averaged 68.15 in first class cricket for the county. The numbers stack up, even if his recent form in the Vitality Blast and the Hundred has been patchy, with his 44 for Welsh Fire last Wednesday representing his highest score in 12 innings since his Test debut.

He missed the third Test against New Zealand at Trent Bridge when Ben Stokes returned for his farewell, but was retained in the squad ahead of another debutant at the Oval, Somerset's James Rew.

That train of thought — that Cox looked so much more comfortable in the Test environment than Rew did — has continued for this Test. Cox has previously had some misfortune when it comes to England, but this is now a break of a very different kind. It is some opportunity.

Hunt raises a glass with coach Marco Airale, inset, after her fourth gold medal

Champagne and KFC as Hunt parties after four gold medals

British sprinter cannot wait to test herself against world's best, writes **Matt Lawton**

After emerging as the star of the European Championships, Amy Hunt celebrated with a glass of champagne, what she described as the "best-tasting KFC of my life" and an hour's sleep for each of her four gold medals. "I got back to the hotel at about midnight, had a massage at 2am and finally got to bed at 4am," she said.

Despite all that, she seemed remarkably bright at 9am yesterday morning; still buzzing after the night before, when she completed a historic sprint quadruple in Birmingham — 100m, 200m, women's 4x100m relay and mixed relay — and looking forward to now testing herself against the very best.

As Hunt knows only too well, after claiming silver over 200m at last year's World Championships, the fastest women on the planet represent countries beyond Europe. They are from the United States, Jamaica, the British Virgin Islands and, in the case of Julien Alfred, Saint Lucia. The Olympic 100m champion ran the third-fastest 200m time in history last month when she clocked a blistering 21.51sec in Monaco.

Hunt's best remains the 22.08 she ran in the semi-final in Tokyo, and while she has dipped under 11 seconds in the 100m for the first time this season, she explained last week how her progress over the longer distance has been stalled by an issue with low blood pressure.

In Birmingham, however, she looked capable of breaking 22 seconds, even if a slow track, a heavy racing schedule and cooling evening temperatures made that extremely difficult. In the end she claimed her second individual victory of the championships on Thursday night in 22.19.

But there are plenty of experts who think it is only a matter of time before the 24-year-old smashes through that barrier too, and gets herself in the mix for a place on more global podiums. Adam Gemili, a former European 200m champion, thinks 21.6 is possible.

With the next few weeks already mapped out — a Diamond League meeting in Lausanne on Friday and next month's World Athletics Ultimate Championships are part of the plan — it could come sooner rather than later.

And what makes it all the more exciting for Hunt is the fact that so many more people will now be with her on her journey.

Hunt is part of a generation of British athletes elevating the sport of track and field with their personality as well as their talent; they are likeable as well as gifted, and embrace the opportunity to tell their story. Hunt said her social media audience had doubled in the past week, and after giving this interview she made an appearance on BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour*.

Such cut-through is important in a heavily congested sporting landscape, with athletes like Hunt and Josh Kerr, the British middle-distance star who delivered last month on his prediction of breaking the world mile record, not afraid to put themselves under a bit of extra pressure by sharing their boldest ambitions.

Hunt articulates the importance of that better than most; even after very little sleep.

"I think just speaking confidently draws people in," she says. "I think people are attracted to that kind of no-façade, full-confidence, full-throttle kind of way of speaking.

"It's something we have in other sports. If you're going into a Wimbledon final, it's obviously quite clear that you want to win. But maybe sometimes as athletes, because there's a lot of jeopardy involved in what we do, with a lot more people on the line running against us, sometimes people are a bit afraid of voicing their ambitions.

"I think life's too short for that. Why not be ambitious? We're all thinking these things, so why not just say them out loud? Especially in a game like the sprints, when you have to be so utterly confident on that start line.

"It's like nothing else on this planet. I'm trying to get from A to B as fast as humanly possible. It's so simple yet it's so kind of complex. I have to be so utterly convinced of myself, my own power, my own strength, my own speed, and my own methodology, to make that all come together. Because it is such a mental game.

"Just having that kind of edge, that confidence, can be crucial. I won my race [the 100m] by two hundredths of a second. That might just be down to confidence."

She nevertheless recognises the benefit beyond the track, with 4.2 million people tuning into the BBC to watch her bring the British baton home in the mixed relay on Sunday night. "I do think it's good for the sport," she says. "We've seen from this championships that the public really loves track and field.

"When it's on their TV screens, people really want to see it and they really love it. We're fortunate enough to have an incredibly successful team, made up of so many inspiring role models and iconic people. I do think athletics coming back with a bit of swagger is what everyone needs."

Already, there is chatter about BBC Sports Personality of the Year and the fact that three or four track athletes should be in contention for the shortlist. As well as Hunt, who is the odds-on favourite to win the award, Kerr has his world record and a dazzling display at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. Georgia Hunter Bell followed world indoor and Commonwealth gold with a third major championship title on Sunday. And don't forget Keely Hodgkinson. She might have had to settle for silver behind Audrey Werro last week but she also won a world indoor title and set a new world record in February.

ANDREW BOYERS/REUTERS; JULIAN FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES; MIKE EGERTON/PA

How Hunt ranks among fastest in world this year

100m		200m	
1. Adaejah Hodge (IVB*)	10.63sec	1. Alfred	21.51sec
2. Sha'Carri Richardson (US)	10.77	2. Hodge	21.68
3. Melissa Jefferson-Wooden (US)	10.78	3. Jefferson-Wooden	21.69
4. Shenese Walker (Jam)	10.80	4. Gabrielle Thomas (US)	21.70
5. Shericka Jackson (Jam)	10.81	5. Jackson	21.87
6. Brianna Selby (US)	10.83	6. Kayla White (US)	21.92
7. Tina Clayton (Jam)	10.85	7. Cambrea Sturgis (US)	21.93
8. Sade McCreath (Can)	10.86	8. Shaunae Miller-Uibo (Bah)	22.04
9. Julien Alfred (LCA**)	10.87	9. JaMeesia Ford (US)	22.07
10. Jassani Carter (US)	10.88	10. Shanoya Mikalia Douglas (Jam)	22.11
25. Amy Hunt (GB)	**10.97**	**14. Hunt**	**22.19**

*British Virgin Islands. **Saint Lucia. Source: worldathletics.org

"That's incredible, especially in a non-Olympic year," Hunt says. "It speaks to the resurgence of track and field in 2026. It's been amazing to see the public fall back in love with us a little bit, and be in people's minds and in people's hearts. It's a really positive thing. Seeing Keely win it [Spoty] two years ago definitely inspires all of us."

Hunt is clearly relishing what comes next. "We definitely showed that we're the sprint nation in terms of Europe," she says. "And that gives all of us a lot of confidence heading into the Worlds next year. We're on the right trajectory.

"Having those medals around your neck, standing on the podium, getting it on your Wikipedia page, it's the biggest confidence boost and kind of becomes a habit that you want to maintain. So I'm really looking forward to Beijing next year.

"The Europeans almost acts as a dress rehearsal, which is something that my coach and I both spoke about. It was one of the reasons we wanted to run so many races.

"At the Olympics in LA [in 2028] the schedule is very packed. It's three rounds of the 100m in one day.

"We planned six races in my legs to see how that truly feels, and test out our recovery strategies. We wanted to really see how my body pulls up, what impacts my menstrual cycle, how all these different things interplay and how we can build that plan looking at the next two years."

So what is the plan? "I have a 200m in Lausanne this Friday," she says. "They've announced Sha'Carri [Richardson] and Shericka [Jackson], which is really fun. I'm looking forward to being announced on the line as the European champion for the first time. That will be a really special moment.

"Then we're heading straight to Zurich on [August] 27th, and that will be a 100, against Melissa [Jefferson-Wooden] and Julien [Alfred]. Then I'm off to Brescia [in Italy], for what is a big meeting for Nike Europe. It's quite close to Padova, where I'm based, so it's a bit of a homecoming. Then comes Brussels for the Diamond League final, and finally the Ultimates next month in Budapest."

She believes the times she craves will follow.

"Coming from Adam [Gemili], that's very high praise," she says. "Him saying 21.6 is amazing, because he's not the type to blow you up for no reason. Darren Campbell [the UKA sprints coach] said to me I can be successful however I choose to run the 200, now that I'm running quicker over the 100. I was running the same times through the first 100 as Dina [Asher-Smith], which is something I've never done before because she's one of the fastest curve runners in the world. To be splitting 11.2 through the first 100 is starting to get to where we need to be."

Hunt does, however, recognise the need to manage expectations, and remains focused as much on the next training session as her longer-term ambitions.

"I'm proud of the way I've handled myself this week," she said. "I'm Gen Z and have a close relationship with my phone. But I've been able to handle being away from it, staying off it as much as possible.

"I actually live my entire life on 'Do Not Disturb', so if you're not on my favourites list, you're not getting through. It also helps that we live in such a bubble in this Renaissance city in northern Italy.

"I'm someone who definitely doesn't shy away from attention and enjoys the sense of performance and putting on a show. Being a role model is something I actively want to step into and enjoy. But I also have a secluded set-up, training partners from all over the world who don't really follow the Europeans, and a family who keep me grounded."

Sunday
Mixed 4x100m gold

Driver 'told riders had passed by' before crash

Cycling
Sean Russell

The driver of the vehicle that killed 19-year-old Finlay Tarling on stage eight of the Volta a Portugal on Friday is unlikely to face criminal charges, according to Portuguese police.

Carlos Canatário, a spokesman for the Guarda Nacional Republicana (GNR), which is investigating the incident, has told RTP (Radio e Televisão de Portugal) that no alcohol or drugs were found in the driver's blood and that the man was in shock. "The investigation will continue, and more evidence will be gathered," he said.

The GNR is now investigating "what type of signage was in that location and whether any signage was removed or not".

Canatário said that Tarling, the NSN Development rider, was trying to catch up with the peloton on a descent. The group had split into three and the "broom wagon", the final vehicle that drives at the back of a cycling race, was behind Tarling. The police escort "could not keep up with Tarling" at this point.

Ahead, the driver of the small van stopped at an intersection from a side road on to the race route.

"In that specific location, we know there were no officers present because it was not one of the locations prioritised in the assessment that had been carried out," Canatário said.

Instead, the van driver asked bystanders if the race had passed, since no more riders were passing on the road, at which point he turned on to the course.

"We know that he stopped at the access road, saw the peloton pass, waited briefly, and asked bystanders if the race was over yet," Canatário added. "They reportedly told him that the last riders had passed and that he could drive on.

"The vehicle was going in the opposite direction to the direction of the race. The cyclist cut across the curve on the left lane — as is natural, as [professional] cyclists do — and that is what caused the cyclist and the vehicle to collide.

"It's humanly impossible to station a police officer at every entrance to the course. Those officers were stationed at busy spots, but this was a secondary access point. For that reason, there were only signs. What was planned was carried out. There were no deviations from the operational plan."

The UCI will also investigate to understand what happened. So far, cycling's governing body has posted on social media that it is "deeply saddened by the tragic death" but no further statement has been issued. The UCI has not yet responded to requests for comment by The Times.

Adam Hansen, the president of the cyclists' union, the CPA, said in a statement: "We are speechless and filled with anger. It is not right that a young athlete's life should end this way, and we are furious that even today it is still not possible to prevent such serious accidents. We share in the grief of his family, friends, team, and everyone who knew Finlay."

Tarling died after colliding with a vehicle during the Volta a Portugal

The day after Tarling's death, the NSN Development Team pulled out of the Volta a Portugal but the organisers continued with the race. The leader's jersey, worn by Alexis Guérin, was changed from yellow to black, and when the Frenchman won at the top of Senhora da Graça the next day, on stage nine, he pointed to the sky to dedicate the win to Tarling.

"I don't know how we carry on from here but we'll figure it out with the support of all our family, friends, and community," a statement from the Tarling family said. "Whilst our broken hearts will never be fixed, he was not only our son and brother but our best mate. Gentle, loving with the driest sense of humour we will miss him terribly."

A fund has been set up in Tarling's name by his agent, Jamie Barlow, with the support of his family. All money from the fund, which has already raised more than £40,000, will help give more children in Wales the chance to ride on the track and roads.

● *To donate, visit* https://www.gofundme.com/f/for-fin-s2u87

Hodgkinson v Hunter Bell v Werro in 800m showdown

CONTINUED FROM BACK

an extra dimension to the race, given her own success in winning the European title over 1,500m on Sunday night as well as silver, behind Odira and in front of Hodgkinson, at last year's World Championships in Tokyo. The 32-year-old, who trains with Hodgkinson under the guidance of husband and wife coaching team Trevor Painter and Jenny Meadows, also won the Commonwealth title over 800m in Glasgow last month.

Organisers of the meet in Zurich announced Hodgkinson's involvement yesterday, with Hunter Bell saying she hoped a race involving "the big five" would happen after clinching her third major title of the season on Sunday, having won world indoor gold over 1,500m in March.

"I can't wait," Hunter Bell said. "Trevor tells me I'm in great shape but I haven't run any personal bests yet this season. I haven't been in the fast races. But all the girls have been talking. We are all trying to come together. There's a good competitive spirit and people get fomo [fear of missing out]. I got fomo the other night, watching the 800m. Keely got fomo when the names of those running in Zurich came out."

It used to be that the big names would seek to avoid one another. Seb Coe and Steve Ovett would only race together at major championships.

In Zurich new quadruple European gold medallist Amy Hunt plans to run the 100m against the Olympic champion Julien Alfred and the world champion Melissa Jefferson-Wooden.

"In a good way, people aren't swerving opportunities," Hunter Bell said. "There's respect, but obviously you want to win. If you are in the same race, everyone runs really fast and you see how it goes."

Women's 800m, Diamond League, Zurich, August 27, 8.41pm. **TV** BBC 3

Sport

Mike Atherton

Bangladesh win over Aussies exposed England's ineptitude

Page 53

Infantino fires executive who criticised him

Lamour opposed Fifa's World Cup sell-off plans

Martyn Ziegler
Sports News Reporter of the Year
Matt Lawton Chief Sports Correspondent

The senior Fifa executive who was first to break ranks in publicly condemning Gianni Infantino for his plan to sell a £20 billion stake in the World Cup has been sacked.

A spokesman for the embattled organisation would say only that their "working relationship" with Kevin Lamour, the chief operating officer who accused Infantino of deceiving staff, had "ended". The Times understands, however, that he has been fired.

Lamour, a Frenchman who is highly respected around the world, released his explosive statement to the Associated Press on July 31 after the details emerged in The Times of the now-aborted Fifa Forward Enterprise proposal.

The 46-year-old said staff had been "deceived" by Infantino, accusing the Fifa president of a lack of transparency in his efforts to raise further capital through private investment. "It is the project of one person," Lamour, who had previously worked with Infantino at Uefa, said. "Not only must this project not go ahead… but the time has now come for football political leaders to ask themselves the right questions and make the right decisions."

Lamour predicted that his statement could have personal consequences. "If that means I lose my job, then so be it," he said. "I will understand and respect that decision. At least I'll sleep well tonight."

A Fifa spokesman confirmed last night "that the working relationship between Fifa and Kevin Lamour as Fifa's chief operating officer has ended".

"Fifa thanks Kevin for his two years of service and wishes him the best of luck for the future," the statement read. "No further comment will be made on the matter."

Staff were notified of Lamour's departure in an email from Mattias Grafstrom, Fifa's secretary-general. In a separate email, seen by The Times, Grafstrom also wrote to Fifa vice-presidents and members of the Fifa council. "Following recent discussions, Fifa and our chief operating officer, Kevin Lamour, have agreed to part ways," he wrote.

"This decision was made after careful consideration and with great respect for Kevin, both personally and professionally. Kevin joined Fifa in November 2024 and in this time has overseen a period of significant change, including improved relationships with stakeholders and the delivery of several significant projects of joint interest, amongst many other key achievements.

"I would like to express my gratitude to Kevin for these contributions and for his work and commitment on behalf of Fifa on a daily basis."

Lamour's exit follows the departure of Infantino's senior adviser, Carlos Cordeiro, who resigned in July over the same issue. Cordeiro said: "As a senior advisor to the Fifa president, a former banker, and a lifelong football fan, I cannot stand by while Fifa considers selling a stake in the World Cup."

ALEJANDRO GARCIA/EPA

Rodri arrives in Barcelona

Midfielder, who won World Cup with Spain, set for medical today before move from Manchester City, who want £85m-valued Ayyoub Bouaddi – page 50

Boehly may sell Chelsea stake

Peter Rutzler, Matt Lawton

Todd Boehly and Mark Walter are in talks to sell their stakes in Chelsea to consortium partner Clearlake Capital.

Boehly, the chairman of Chelsea, and Walter are part of the consortium led by Clearlake known as BlueCo, which purchased the club from Roman Abramovich in 2022 for £2.5 billion, with a further £1.75 billion earmarked for investment.

If the talks, first reported by the Financial Times, reach a successful conclusion, they would result in Clearlake expanding its shareholding of BlueCo. Clearlake, an American private equity firm led by financiers Behdad Eghbali and José E Feliciano, own 61.5 per cent of BlueCo, while Boehly, Walter and Hansjorg Wyss — a 90-year-old Swiss businessman — hold the remainder of the consortium's shareholding. Eghbali

Continued on page 51

Brits to meet in 800m for ages

Matt Lawton

Keely Hodgkinson and Georgia Hunter Bell will both face the new Swiss middle-distance sensation Audrey Werro in a "big five" showdown in Zurich later this month.

In what promises to be an 800m race for the ages, world champion Lilian Odira and Dutch superstar Femke Broeders-Bol have also agreed to race over two laps at the Diamond League meeting on August 27.

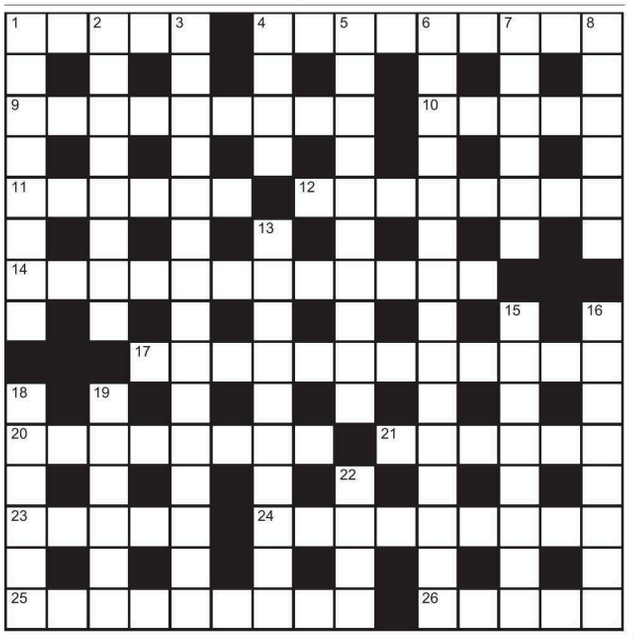
Werro beat Hodgkinson, the Olympic champion, for the second time this season when she claimed gold in last week's European Championships in Birmingham, with Broeders-Bol finishing third.

In Zurich it will be 22-year-old Werro who has the benefit of a home crowd.

But Hunter Bell's involvement adds

Continued on page 55

Times Crossword 29,624



ACROSS

1 Parrot about to stuff mouth (5)
4 Member of defence regularly saw what overlooked claims could be? (9)
9 Cleric managed to nab retiring journalist on Russian river (5,4)
10 Band splits after going west (5)
11 Reverse hype? Relax (6)
12 This speaker approves two tries (4,4)
14 Corrupt eminent cop; extremely cocky example of uselessness (12)
17 Local left in charge of small hospital in trendy teaching institution (6,6)
20 Deliberate individual nuance (8)
21 Shakes "a kilo" in brief search (6)
23 Matter of huge imaginary circle having radius cut (5)
24 Article, risqué, about old Conservative form of government (9)
25 Screw undone, ergo nearly out (9)
26 Organ essentially protected by vein implant (5)

DOWN

1 Romeo's friend met Curio after tense exchanges with Romeo (8)
2 Shell in vehicle shifting quickly (8)
3 Something covering features with a crude humourless act (6,9)
4 Snubbed robust complaint (4)
5 Meeting company with head lacking in deduction (10)
6 Regional administrators instruct codicil should be changed (8,7)
7 Warder missing northern country (6)
8 Leave cornered, pulled up after partial loss of power (6)
13 Duke's gushing, not upset (10)
15 Naval location cut short, over 0.9144m (8)
16 Lloyd set fancy typeface (3,5)
18 Shocked judge took flight having lost billions (6)
19 Arm functioning after electronic hand shackles withdrawn (6)
22 A round American fruit (4)

Yesterday's solution 29,623

I	M	P	I	S	H	L	Y	■	O	R	A	C	L	E
N	■	I	■	T	■	I	■	F	■	E	■	H	■	N
S	A	T	U	R	A	T	I	O	N	P	O	I	N	T
T	■	C	■	A	■	H	■	O	■	R	■	R	■	I
E	N	H	A	N	C	E	■	T	R	O	O	P	E	R
P	■	F	■	G	■	■	W	■	O	■	■	■	■	E
■	B	O	N	E	I	D	L	E	■	F	A	C	E	T
B	■	R	■	■	■	I	■	A	■	■	■	O	■	Y
A	S	K	E	W	■	S	C	R	U	T	I	N	Y	■
L	■	■	■	A	■	A	■	■	■	O	■	T	■	M
A	P	P	A	R	E	L	■	S	H	U	T	E	Y	E
N	■	A	■	R	■	L	■	I	■	G	■	N	■	D
C	A	S	T	A	L	O	N	G	S	H	A	D	O	W
E	■	T	■	N	■	W	■	H	■	E	■	E	■	A
D	E	A	R	T	H	■	S	T	I	N	G	R	A	Y

Check today's answers by ringing 0905 757 0141 by midnight. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke 0333 202 3390.

Newspapers support recycling
The recycled paper content of UK newspapers in 2024 was 34.7%

9 771742 498721 34

TIMES 2

August 18 | 2026

Would you let your partner track you? Jamie does

Helen Rumbelow on the rise of relationship ‘surveillance’

Like influencers, I've taken stupid risks. It used to be called showing off

Robert Crampton

Tayane Dalazen, a Brazilian lawyer and "social media personality", was taking photos of herself swimming with a nurse shark when it bit her on the leg. It takes a lot to wind up a nurse shark. They're exceptionally placid creatures, the Quakers of the shark world.

Still, Ms Dalazen has now got a sickle-shaped scar on her thigh to display on Insta. Looking at the photo she inevitably posted, struck by how smug she looked, I had a blinding insight: these so-called influencers are nothing new, all that's happened is that a time-honoured personality type has been rebranded. Pre-social media, what are now called influencers were called simply show-offs.

I should know, because I was one. When I was even younger than the proudly cicatrised Brazilian, I also went swimming with nurse sharks. (And barracudas, although I kept them at a distance. Sinister buggers, barracudas.) I was 25, acting macho, succumbing to peer pressure, showing off, take your pick. I was trying to impress — influence, if you will — the people I was with, including myself. If I could have guaranteed a not-too-unsightly shark bite (well clear of arteries and bones, obvs) to parade through life as a badge of courage, I'd have taken it.

Those idiots who stand absurdly close to the edge of precipitous drops for selfies — back a bit, back a bit more, arrrrrgh! — are showing off as well. I've done that too, and survived, with no camera present, only an eye-rolling girlfriend to influence. Silly behaviour. A wholly unjustified risk. No obvious payoff, no thrill of achievement, just pure bravado. Darwin Award territory, like those people who tie helium weather balloons to deckchairs then float up to 20,000 feet and die.

Throughout my twenties and early thirties, up until becoming a dad, I ran through a range of adventure and extreme sports, some for work, some for the vibe, all for purposes of showing off, to myself, to mates, to colleagues, to women, to readers.

Wing walking, skydiving, high diving, abseiling, land windsurfing,

cave diving, paragliding on skis, cliff jumping, microlighting, snowmobiling, zip wiring, martial arts practising and jet skiing. I raced around Brands Hatch barely in control of a high-performance car. I tried motocross, breaking several ribs and a collarbone. I wouldn't call this activity thrill-seeking or the result of an adrenaline fixation, I'd call it bigging myself up. If the tech had been available, I may well have put some or all of that tomfoolery online.

I enjoyed most of those stunts, except the boxing. In the ring, sparring, I discovered belatedly that one, I did not want to hit a total stranger and two, I most definitely did not want a total stranger to hit me, which pretty much rules out the fight game.

I also didn't relish walking barefoot across an expanse of broken glass for a dare, even though I was blind drunk and thus felt no pain. That sort of stupidity now gets called "the latest internet challenge craze" but youthful idiocy is hardly a new thing. As teenagers, the lads used to egg each other on to cycle around at 2am with no lights on and our eyes shut.

At 62, I'm now of an age where I can shake my head about the follies of youth, make fun of influencer culture, bemoan the shallow posturing of posts and likes and stories. But maybe I behaved in a not entirely dissimilar fashion, way back when, albeit witnessed by far fewer people. All thinking however, then as now: "What a twerp."

Bobby dazzled me at Hull

On Saturday Hull City will play their first match back in the Premier League after nine seasons "in transition", as we say in football. The Mighty Tigers are home to Manchester United, a fixture which prompts memories of the one I attended on Boxing Day 2013. My wife and I had kindly been invited to the directors' box to watch the game, preceded by lunch. Various legends of both clubs were in attendance.

"Hello," I said, "I'm Robert Crampton," and offered my hand to the elderly man already seated opposite my allotted place. He rose from his chair politely and shook my hand. "Nice to meet you," he said, "I'm Bobby Charlton."

For the first 15 or so years of my life, maybe longer, Charlton was probably the most famous Englishman in the world. He did not, as the cliché has it, require any introduction. How classy, I thought, that Sir Bobby was humble enough to provide one all the same.

Viennese loo rules stink

A young Austrian woman, Melanie Gradik, is suing the city of Vienna because she has to pay to use a public loo while her male friends get to urinate for free. (Cue 1981-era joke: when I next have to use a facility in the Austrian capital, I shall make sure to sing "it costs nothing to peeeeee! Ohhhh," etc.) Ms Gradik reckons charging women but not men to use the city's toilets violates anti-discrimination laws. She's right, surely. I can't see how anyone could argue otherwise.

I've long thought the male-female public loo situation was unfair. Women have to queue up for ages, men get to dash in, wee more or less in the direction of a urinal then go about their day. Then again, we have to endure a miasmic hellhole, while over at the ladies, I'm told, all is flowers and fragrance. Worth the wait, perhaps.

They're a couple who track. What about you?

Jamie and Jools Oliver have starred in a short film for a tracking app. Whether you share your location with a partner is a divisive issue, says Helen Rumbelow

Do I love thee, in sickness and in health, and with all location-tracking services on my phone switched on at all times, so help me God I do? To track or not to track the whereabouts of a romantic partner is now the big relationship question.

The widespread use of apps such as Life360 or Find My has brought digital surveillance culture right into the marriage contract: when the request is brought up, it can bring resentment on both sides. The trackers (aka stalkers to their loving spouses) argue that they care about safety and logistics, and what's the problem with wearing the equivalent of a probationary electronic ankle tag if you really aren't having an affair?

The anti-trackers (aka love rats to their loving spouses) argue back, while somehow finding it impossible to not look sweatily shifty. They say they are probably not cheating, not really. It's just there is a last part of their soul that needs — or even deserves, as a precious human right — protecting in its adult mystery. And which side is the more trusting anyway?

Or, as the comedian Nate Bargatze put it, his wife's location tracking is "worse than what the government is doing". His wife will message him to say "why are you eating doughnuts?"

"If I want to eat doughnuts, I don't want to be putting my phone in a locker and paying cash for doughnuts," Bargatze has said. "I've done it once, but I'm not doing it every time."

Jamie Oliver has now come charging into the debate with a campaign on the side of tracking spouses. According to a "micro-comedy series" he has filmed for Life360 alongside his wife, Jools, and his dog, Conker, tracking is not only benign but life-saving.

In this drama Jamie is "finding himself" in the remote location of some kind of semi-sinister, possibly naked midlife crisis retreat. But luckily Jools knows exactly where her husband's location is as she, of course, tracks him on Life360. By the time Jamie shouts into the woods, "Come and get me, Jools!" she is already there.

Life360 adds in the accompanying information that Conker also wears a tracking device. I am confident that Conker is a very good boy so presumably neither he nor Jamie has to return to the house, tail between legs, with Jools tapping the Life360 data asking for an explanation for their unaccounted, unauthorised movements of the last three hours.

The Oliver campaign plays into the "safetyism" culture that has long been the stalking horse of increasing digital surveillance. The Life360 app was actually conceived after Hurricane Katrina, and stories abound of spouses rescued due to location tracking. Just this year Michael Harris was skiing alone in Washington state when his wife noticed that his tracker dot wasn't moving on the slopes. He was in fact unconscious in a snow hole and his wife's ability to guide a ski patrol to his exact spot saved his life.

This safety-tracking argument is generational. Is it sinister for Jools Oliver to suddenly appear at your location (not everyone gets Jools Oliver with Life360, spouses may vary) or does it make you feel secure? If you are a boomer, especially if living alone, you may be tracked by your children "for your own safety". If you are Generation Y, you track your children "for their own safety", and that became a gateway drug to tracking your spouse too.

If you are Generation Z, you were probably tracked by your parents since before you could remember and now track your girlfriend along with hundreds of your friends on features like Snap Maps in an arrangement that feels like a safety net but looks, to anti-trackers, like a spider's web.

Jamie Oliver said in interviews as early as 2018 that he used Life360 to track his family. "If one of the girls says, 'I'm going to Camden Town,' and I can see they've gone to Reading, then we have a problem." However, he said his family also checked on

COVER: SHUTTERSTOCK

him to monitor "how fast I'm driving. It's brilliant."

This is how relationship tracking has become the default for the younger generation. In her song *Black Dog*, Taylor Swift, 36, captures an unprecedented modern pain: being dumped by someone whom you still track because they are still digitally committed in the form of a location-tracking relationship. See? Boomers may at this point be forgiven for reflecting nostalgically on a golden age of geolocation-free adultery.

"And your location, you forgot to turn it off," Swift sings to this ex-boyfriend. "And so I watch as you walk into some bar called the Black Dog. And pierce new holes in my heart. You forgot to turn it off, and it hits me."

Alex Cooper, 31, host of *Call Her Daddy*, one of the world's most popular podcasts, is married and comfortable with location sharing.

"I personally don't care about sharing my location because I have nothing to hide and Matt [her husband] has nothing to hide," Cooper said on a recent podcast. "But if someone is saying no to you, and that person is your husband, I guess I would want to know why."

For older parents like myself, entry to this world was through tracking our children on the "family circle" function of Life360. It felt only fair that we had to "pay to play" and share our own locations. Surprisingly our children did and still do want this location tracking, without qualm. It was my partner and me who found our new superpower of invisible eyes on each other at all times unexpectedly nervy.

It is not just that the apps can be a little inaccurate. The comedian Anjelah Johnson has said that her relationship's location-sharing app is

Jamie and Jools Oliver in the Life360 campaign

"If you are Gen Z, you were probably tracked by your parents since before you could remember

"technically not stalking because we're married". She woke up one night to find her husband's location as motionless in the centre of the busy road outside their house. She walked down the stairs, already practising her solemn face for the funeral, to find him asleep on the sofa. Other rankles are a spouse who says they are "on their way home" when located firmly at the office. Or spouses "working so hard" on a foreign business trip, quite brazenly tracked to the beach bar.

It is more that, for our generation, tracking has, despite Jamie Oliver's best efforts, bad PR. Once I set off interrailing alone for weeks at a time, untraceable. When I was sleeping in random locations across multiple possible countries, no one in the world knew or could know where I was. In our youth we were trained to associate digital surveillance with prisons, either literal ones or the totalitarian state. In adulthood we associated tracking with our children. Did we really want to make an infantile prison of our adult love life?

This is the most common complaint of the anti-trackers, and can be summarised as "it's creepy". They either do not want to give yet more personal information to "the Man", by which they mean our digital overlords, or to "the Man" in their relationship, which confusingly could be the woman: there is no pattern to which gender is the more paranoid.

"I refused my wife location sharing," one friend said. "As soon as she saw which route I took, she would suggest a different one. As soon as she saw where I was at any given time she would say I was going to be late." She would probably be right, I suggested. Right, yes, but with a level of control that was unhelpful to the relationship.

There is a deeper wisdom here. Just as social media is weakening our attention spans, so the ability to location track in relationships is weakening our capacity to trust.

Esther Perel, the famed psychotherapist, had a podcast conversation this year with Rachel Botsman, an associate fellow at Oxford University and expert on trust. Perel was sceptical of location tracking in relationships, saying: "If you need to know everything, you're not trusting." Botsman agreed. Trust, Botsman said, was "a confident relationship with the unknown". Those who equate trust with complete digital tracking are being denied the chance to exercise their trust muscles.

This is the divide Peter Crouch and his wife, Abbey Clancy, articulated in their podcast this year, with Crouch wanting to exit their couples Life360 group.

"It's a violation," Crouch said. "It's for the children, not checking up on partners."

Clancy replied: "I'm not checking up, I want to see you're safe."

Crouch: "Nonsense."

Clancy: "It's the God's honest truth."

I'm with Team Crouch. It is feasible there are activities that don't affect a relationship but perhaps would be embarrassing for a partner to know, from cataloguing vintage postboxes to playing snooker or illicit manicures and I can't finish this list for security reasons I'm sure you understand. As Barack Obama said of his wife, Michelle, in 2009, "I trust her completely, but at the same time she is also a complete mystery to me... it's that tension between familiarity and mystery that makes for something strong."

I understand how loving it can feel for someone to want to track you. As an older man said plaintively in the office, "I've never even been asked to be tracked!" Yet in long-term relationships, the joy of being unseen may be as important as the joy of being seen.

After a few years we each turned the alerts on Life360 off. The notification I got when my partner was a few minutes away from home is cited as helpful by some couples as a "signal to put the pasta on". For me it felt, counterintuitively, too much like an alert to hustle the randy milkman from a 1960s *Carry On* film out of the back window. Instead I retain my location tracking only for emergencies and try not to look at it. I trust him to do the same.

The hot new specs? Space goggles, duh!

How big are your sunglasses? The fashion pack have been known for wearing the sort of shades that obscure half their face whether the sun is shining or not, but this summer's newly cool style, which some are calling space goggles, goes even further.

Bug-eyed, aviator, even rhomboid, these frames are so pumped up they might pass as skiwear. Gone are last year's fashionably small lozenge frames, inspired by the Nineties style icon Carolyn Bessette-Kennedy: this latest crop are more Ground Control to Major Tom. At Copenhagen Fashion Week this month many opted for Prada's sci-fi-sounding PR B2IS style, while others on the front row were in rounder (but no less chunky) Twiggy-esque styles from Tom Ford.

Saint Laurent has been an early champion of the super-shades trend. The luxury French house has spent several recent seasons showcasing chunky retro aviators on its catwalk, inspired by the bespoke Maison Bonnet frames worn by the label's founder, Yves. In June it released an

Madonna

even more angular statement style named the Saint Laurent MI19 Blaze sunglasses (£705, ysl.com). Madonna shielded herself behind them when she attended its latest menswear show, and a few seats away from her Kate Moss and Rami Malek were wearing vast sunnies too.

The French actress Isabelle Huppert is often to be found hiding behind her massive Balenciagas at the Cannes Film Festival, while at last month's World Cup final Victoria Beckham looked on in a pair of large black sunglasses from her own line.

Sunglasses have proved a lucrative category for luxury brands even as the wider market for designer goods slows. Space goggles are but the latest development in a series of eyewear trends that have taken over in the past decade, as shoppers realise that logoed frames are easy to show off in selfies. According to Modor Intelligence, the global eyewear market hit $172.92 billion this year — up a reported 4.4 per cent from last year.

According to ShopMy, an influencer-driven shopping platform, the oversized, angular Phoebe Philo Bombe frames are one of the site's bestsellers this year.

Fashion has never met an accessory it couldn't supersize. This season, it's your sunglasses' turn.

Susie Lethbridge

Meet the Owens: a star striker, a Love Island finalist and no jeopardy at all

By allowing cameras into their homes, the Osbournes and the Kardashians provided light entertainment gold. The Owens? Not so much, says Hilary Rose

On paper, the format rarely fails. You stick attractive people in an aspirational house and let them talk about whatever interests them. In the Kardashians' case, that was themselves. The Osbournes had the lunacy of its patriarch and the jeopardy that comes with a man who once bit the head off a bat.

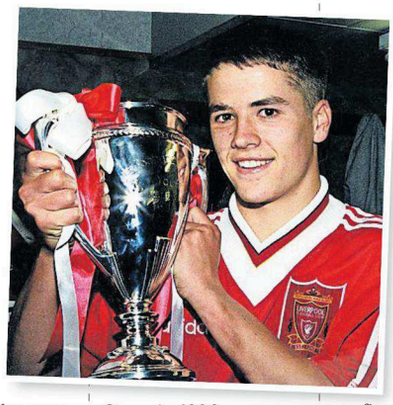
The powers that be in TV have evidently now decided that football is where it's at, hence the countless hours of Beckham, Rooney, Vardy and Mourinho kicking balls and talking about themselves. Now the ex-footballer Michael Owen and family have got in on the act with *Meet the Owens*, a fly-on-the-wall about his lovely family, their lovely home and his lovely new career running a stud farm in Cheshire. You can imagine the excitement at the production meeting. "Attractive family! Long-suffering wife! Kitchen big enough to film in! Sexy horses and a daughter who's been on *Love Island*. Plus a footballer." They must have thought "Jilly Cooper in Cheshire, with more pitches".

It turns out to be quite difficult to make this format either fun or interesting, although in the interests of fairness I should point out that I was having a lovely time watching paint dry for prolonged periods, and the fun stuff could have happened then. However, I pass no judgment on this perfectly nice, blameless, stratospherically wealthy and blessed family who are just trying to earn a meagre crust. Instead, on the basis that information is power, I will tell you what they say and you can decide for yourself whether you want to *Meet the Owens*, as the title invites you to, or wash your hair instead.

It opens with the man of the family acting batshit crazy in a batshit crazy mansion in LA with his batshit family... oh wait, no. We're in a big brown house in Cheshire, where it is brown and raining, and Michael Owen says: "I was always exceptionally talented at football, breaking every record at every level." We learn that he and his wife, Louise, were childhood sweethearts who have three daughters and a son. He now has a horse training business and horses, we learn, are a way of life. We cut to a dog eating chips off a plate that has been placed on the floor upstairs, and Michael downstairs, hilariously recounting to his family that he can't remember where he put his chips down.

Michael and Louise Owen with their four children. Right and above right: the Owens at Cheltenham and Wimbledon

The rain keeps coming. He gets a Laughing Cow cheese triangle out of the fridge and says he's going to have Dairylea on toast, while explaining that he buys horses, then he sells horses and somewhere in between he trains them. His wife thinks it's amazing for their family and one of their daughters says they are all passionate about horses, including her dad. This is confirmed when someone says that James, their son, is also very interested in horses, and Gemma likes horses so much she decides to prove it, by telling us the name of every single horse she's ever had.



Owen in 1996

Then she goes to Cheltenham racecourse, where it isn't raining because it's in Gloucestershire, not Cheshire. *Love Island* is a big show, Gemma says, adding: "I'd love to do more in the racing space but my background is in dressage." She then gets out of a Range Rover and later into one, and Michael says what a quick racehorse that is. Still at Cheltenham, Gemma wonders if Welsh phones have a different country code from England. The excitement builds. Suddenly we're back north at Chester racecourse, where Michael is eating a mini banoffee pie and Hugo the horse trainer confirms that his job is training racehorses. In an ideal world he would like to train them so well that they win races, but sometimes they don't.

> **This is a man who can eat Laughing Cow and call it Dairylea**

Back at the Owen manse in Cheshire, it's still raining and the paterfamilias is wearing a velvet jacket and sitting on a brown leather sofa, delivering his thoughts on being a racehorse owner. "Your hope is that they win," he says, "but they don't always do." Next time: Michael buys more horses. Gemma rides horses. She's training for a race, even though dressage is her thing, and tells us that dressage is about precision but racing is about speed. Then we're at a horse auction and Michael tells us he loves auctions and Louise confirms that Michael loves auctions and Michael explains how auctions work. Gemma tells a horse it is cute and Michael,

SHUTTERSTOCK

back home again on the brown leather sofa, tells us he's always the last person on the dancefloor, because this is a man with a wild streak, a man who can eat Laughing Cow and call it Dairylea.

At one point he spends £273,000 on horses and tells his wife that's "over quarter of a million". Then we cut to him riding a horse in a race in 2017 in which he came second and Louise says yes, he came second, and Gemma also confirms that he came second. Before you know it, it's Christmas and Michael is explaining how Christmas works for children: you open your presents and then you play with them. Hilariously, a bauble gets smashed. Next time we're going to be in Bahrain but will there be horses? We'll have to wait and see.

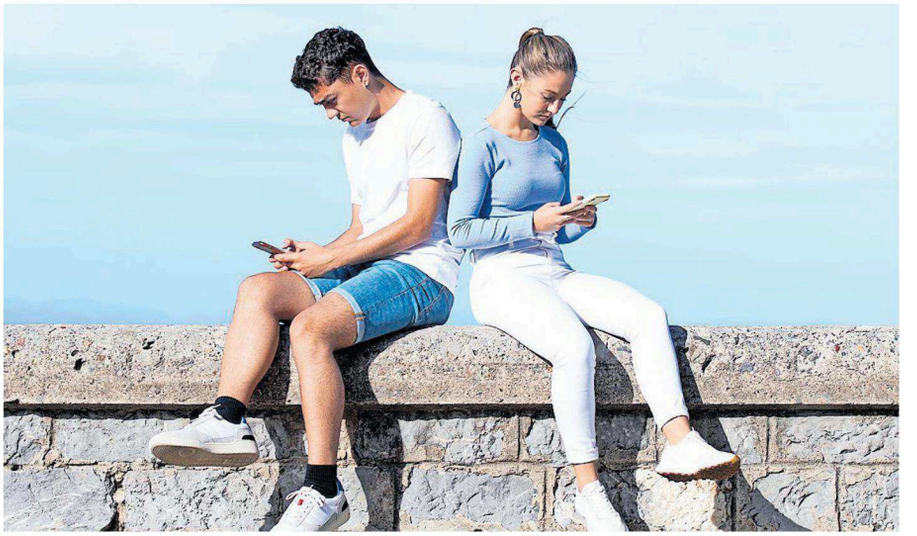
Look, I'm not a TV producer. I don't know why Kim Kardashian saying in a California monotone, "So Kourtney and I are going to get our nails done today," is blockbuster stuff generating thousands of episodes over dozens of years. But I do know that Michael Owen saying, "You just want what's best for your kids," or "I've come to realise I need a purpose in life," is not the same thing. It isn't so much dialogue as a stream of (barely) consciousness. It's almost enough to make me nostalgic for the snappy dialogue and relaxed, natural joie de vivre that *With Love, Meghan* failed so utterly to create. At least in Montecito the sun shines and there are pretty flowers and lovely outfits. Cheshire seems to be cast in perpetual winter with only Michael Owen in a velvet blazer and the occasional anorak for variety. So by all means, meet the Owens if you want to. I will be finding out what colour Kim painted her nails and whether Kourtney went for nail art. Now that's what I call jeopardy.

***Meet the Owens* is available from August 28 on Prime Video**

Gen Z are having a quarter-life crisis. I know what's causing it

Extortionate rent, student debt, the romance recession — and don't get me started on AI, says Olivia Petter

GETTY IMAGES



Jarvis Cocker had it right when he summed up young people's options as to "dance and drink and screw because there's nothing else to do". It's the modus operandi of youth: consume too much, go out too late and make too many silly decisions, ideally in a club with really sticky floors.

But today, more than three decades since *Common People* came out, Cocker's words feel laughably archaic. Because young people aren't dancing, drinking or screwing. We're having a quarter-life crisis instead. According to research by the University of Greenwich, one in five young adults (those aged 18-29) are facing issues regarding housing, education and careers that are making them question their future prospects.

Among those surveyed, 14 per cent reported struggling with adult independence, 18 per cent said they felt uncertain about future career opportunities and 15 per cent said they were grappling with identity issues.

The findings support existing data that suggests the kids are not all right: a recent report from the financial technology company SumUp, conducted by YouGov, found that 46 per cent of Gen Z feel their finances are behind those of people around them, with 31 per cent having lost sleep thinking about their financial situations.

At 32, I'm a little beyond Gen Z, but for the sake of delusion and denial, which I'm aware might be symptoms of my slightly-more-than-a-quarter-life-crisis, I'm including myself in this demographic. Because this is just a snapshot of the issues I and those around me grapple with daily.

Almost all of us are facing ludicrous student debts, renting flats we can barely afford from legally dubious landlords, and living with unhinged strangers who, at best, keep us awake and steal our food, and at worst threaten to poison our pets and scream in our faces at 3am because we turned the heating off — this actually happened in my last place.

People my age can forget about getting on the housing ladder unless they happen to have generational wealth, a generationally wealthy partner or a really popular OnlyFans account. "I could only afford to move out of my family home because I found a friend whose parents could rent me a room way below market rate," says Ursula*, 29. "The only way to survive in London as a creative person is if you're living on mates rates."

Then there's the professional precarity, a feeling exacerbated by shrinking career opportunities and the looming threat of AI. Last week a friend of mine shared an Instagram Story on A-level results day, writing that, despite getting straight As, gaining a 2:1 from a Russell Group university and being awarded a

> **For a while the headline was that none of us were having sex**

distinction in her master's, she still hadn't found full-time work since graduating in 2019.

This pattern is common among those in creative professions: clever friends who have written books are retraining as teachers, and one musician is considering going into property development. Others are reliant on partners with corporate jobs.

I haven't even mentioned social media yet; the language we've all come of age learning is one characterised by curation and comparison. Imagine what that does to our mental health. On top of this, community, cultural or otherwise, has been more or less eradicated. Instead we're slaves to our independent algorithms, existing in silos and consuming whatever content has been chosen for us by some quarter-zip fleece-wearing nerds in Silicon Valley.

"I'm seeing an unnatural amount of people with abnormal lives before 9am," says Ellie*, 25. "One of my best friends is travelling in Australia, another has just bought a house and one has had a baby but we're all having these feelings of 'what if I'm not doing the right thing?' while navigating our careers, friendships, and being pulled in 100 directions of what our life should or could look like, and whether this is really the life we want. I'm trying to limit my screentime."

Don't even get me started on the "romance recession". We're all navigating a dating scene that has made looking for love feel like shopping in Poundland — overwhelming, rushed and requiring an astute ability to differentiate tat from treasure. This is harder than it sounds. I can't tell you the number of times I've dated someone who initially presents as the perfect partner only to wind up being crueller and more callous than the mediocre ones.

For a while the headline was that none of us were having sex. Now we've also stopped kissing too, apparently: a recent YouGov survey, commissioned by oral care brand Waken, found that a third of those aged 18 to 24 had avoided a kiss because they lacked confidence. Before you even get to consider the prospect of a snog, you have to think about paying for the date, which is another increasing, anxiety-inducing, expense.

"I don't think I've been wined and dined by anyone I've dated except my current boyfriend," says Ursula, recalling a time an ex offered to cook her dinner before asking if she could pick up half the ingredients and alcohol on her way. "I definitely spent double what he spent. It was all under the guise of him putting on a lovely date and he hadn't even left the house."

All things considered, it would probably do us the world of good to spend a few days doing nothing but drinking, dancing and screwing. But this isn't the 1990s. So we'll probably just doomscroll ourselves into a panic attack instead before smearing some avocado on toast and posting a photo of it to Instagram #breakfastgoals.

**names have been changed*

health

You're familiar with A&E, but do you know the importance of A&G to your medical treatment?

Dr Mark Porter

Much has changed in the NHS during my 40-year career, most of it for the good. However, I do miss being able to pick up the phone and chat with specialist colleagues when faced with a patient I'm worried about, but uncertain how to proceed. Calls like that are all too rare now, with today's equivalent being an online request for advice and guidance (A&G), prompting a response from the hospital within a few days — if you are lucky.

The increasing use of A&G has upset many GPs after concerns that it is sometimes used to reject referrals and reduce waiting lists, and that even when used appropriately it transfers too much of the hospital's traditional workload and clinical responsibility back to already overstretched GP practices.

A&G isn't new. It was introduced as an NHS pathway in England in 2015 (schemes vary across the UK and Wales still doesn't have one). It may be well established but use has exploded in recent years after increasing pressure on GPs to use A&G, particularly for specialities with long waits such as cardiology, dermatology and ENT — and the offer of various financial incentives. It's the classic carrot-and-stick approach long used by the NHS to implement change.

From a patient perspective, it's mostly a good thing. My first experience was with dermatology. Instead of referring patients with skin lesions or rashes I wasn't sure about, I could email high-resolution photos and get an opinion within a few days. And those opinions varied from "I need to see this patient asap and will send them an appt" to "it's just a wart, Mark".

A&G means patients often get the right treatment more quickly. Waits for some specialities, such as cardiology, neurology and endocrinology, often exceed a year in our patch, but an A&G request typically prompts a response within a few days (albeit sometimes much longer).

> **The increasing use of 'advice and guidance' has upset many GPs**

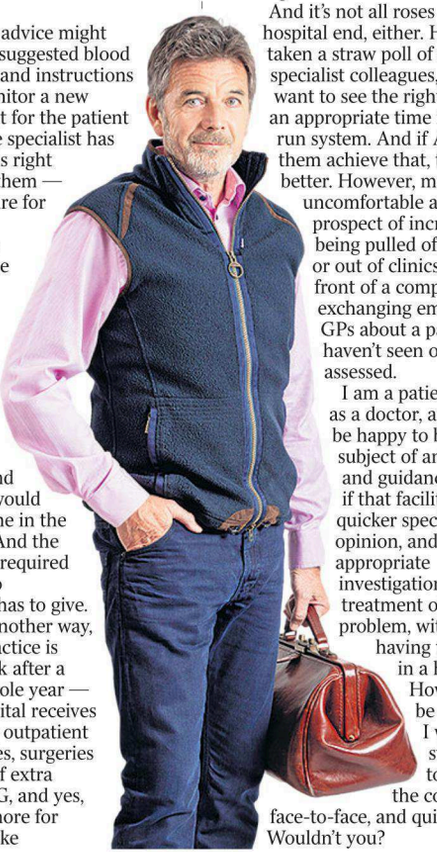
The resulting advice might include a list of suggested blood tests and scans, and instructions to start and monitor a new treatment. Great for the patient — assuming the specialist has got the diagnosis right without seeing them — but extra pressure for the GP.

A referral can typically be done in less than ten minutes but responding to A&G can take a GP hours if it involves booking complex investigations such as scans and follow-up that would normally be done in the hospital clinic. And the extra resources required are not there, so something else has to give.

Or, to put it another way, a typical GP practice is paid £130 to look after a patient for a whole year — less than a hospital receives for a single new outpatient appointment. Yes, surgeries have had a bit of extra funding for A&G, and yes, they can earn more for hitting targets like vaccination, but there is still a big shortfall in resources with a knock-on effect on how easy it is to get a timely appointment at your surgery.

It has been estimated that widespread adoption of A&G could divert about 25 per cent of all referrals, reducing pressure on hospitals and their waiting lists. NHS England denies that this is a target, saying the intention is simply "to avoid adding patients to outpatient waiting lists when they can receive timely diagnosis, advice or management in a more appropriate setting".

Most GPs can still do a conventional referral but, increasingly, specialists triaging requests from GPs are converting them into advice and guidance: "Please do the following and we will see them in our outpatient clinic in a year's time." Not always appropriately, according to some of my colleagues. And from October of this year A&G is likely to be the primary referral route into hospitals for the busier specialities.



And it's not all roses at the hospital end, either. Having taken a straw poll of some of my specialist colleagues, they just want to see the right patients at an appropriate time in a well-run system. And if A&G helps them achieve that, then all the better. However, many are uncomfortable at the prospect of increasingly being pulled off the wards, or out of clinics, to sit in front of a computer exchanging emails with GPs about a patient they haven't seen or fully assessed.

I am a patient as well as a doctor, and would be happy to be the subject of an advice and guidance request if that facilitated a quicker specialist opinion, and appropriate investigation and treatment of my problem, without having to set foot in a hospital. However, to be candid, I would still prefer to see the consultant face-to-face, and quickly. Wouldn't you?

The facts about advice and guidance

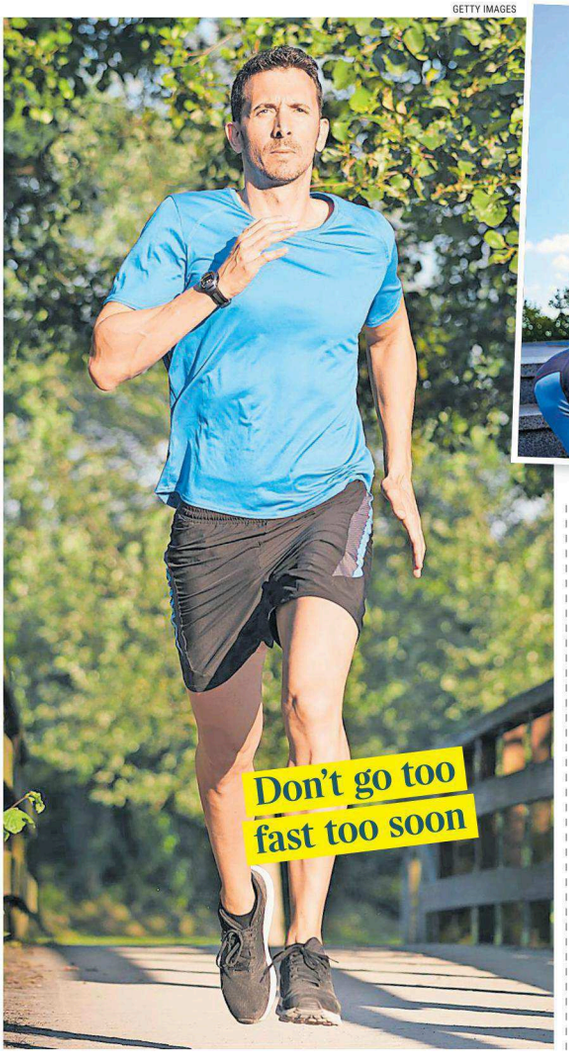
- **In the first eight months of last year there were 2.2 million requests via advice and guidance in England alone, resulting in 1.1 million patients being treated without joining a waiting list.**
- **Suspected cancer referrals from GPs are generally not included in A&G pathways (although this is being piloted in some areas).**
- **NHS England deems a timely response as being within two days for urgent requests, and within five days for routine ones.**
- **For more details visit england.nhs.uk**

NHS
Providing NHS services
Boots
PrescriptionsPlus
FREE delivery
24/7 TRACK by text* or online
EXPERT pharmacist advice
Loved by our online customers**
★★★★½
Scan or visit your local Boots to switch today
in store | boots.com | app
For patients registered with participating GP surgeries. Prescription charges may apply. Order via boots.com for free delivery via Royal Mail in England only & online tracking. Subject to availability. *Sign up to text messaging service required. **Rating from boots.com, average rating 4.5 captured 9 December 2025.
Boots
With you. For life.

How to speed up your 5k run

The popularity of running is surging — experts give Peta Bee their top tips for improving your personal best

GETTY IMAGES



We are in the middle of a running boom that has achieved the unthinkable and made running cool. The sport's popularity also spiked in the Seventies and Eighties, but the difference this time is it's not just serious spindly types with tight shorts and a stopwatch addiction who are lacing up their trainers.

While participation in cycling and swimming seems to have levelled off, over half a million more people took up running last year — the most recent figures from Sport England estimate that 7.1 million of us now run regularly. Race participation is also increasingly popular. A recent survey by sportsshoes.com found that over half of runners (54 per cent) took part in some form of competitive running last year, with participation highest among Gen Z (69 per cent completed a race) and millennials (60 per cent). The most popular distance? The 5k.

Most of us live within three miles of a free Parkrun and, says Tom Craggs, running coach and head of endurance at UK Athletics, "It's a great distance to target as training volume is manageable and there are plenty of options to test your fitness."

But how can you improve your performance?

Target a 5k goal

There are thousands of 5km races on road and trail each year (check findarace.com or poweroflO.uk for detailed lists), so plan your training around one, allowing yourself up to three months' build-up for a serious attempt at a fast time. It's worth clocking a Parkrun to get an idea of your speed and to work out training paces and a goal time.

And if the thought of running in wind and rain this autumn fills you with dread, you might be tempted by Run X, a 5km global treadmill running competition for all levels.

Slow down to get faster

Most novice runners run too fast too soon and pay the price either in terms of losing motivation, as it just feels too hard, or because they're sidelined with injuries such as shin splints. "Even for elite 5k runners, the foundations of success come from lots of easy and steady running," Craggs says. "From observing inexperienced runners, I would say most do relatively more of their workload at a high intensity than Olympians, which is a big mistake."

As tempting as it is to launch yourself into hill sprints, fartlek and track sessions early on, you need to build up with 3-4 weeks of runs at easy pace (at 50 per cent effort, a chatty pace) and steady pace (about 60 per cent effort, a level at which you can hold a stilted conversation rather than chat without pausing for breath). "This foundation phase improves your body's mechanical conditioning so that you can cope with the introduction of more demanding work later on," Craggs says. "Adding gentle volume also means you are less likely to get injured in the long term."

Add short bursts of uphill effort

Once you've built your aerobic base you can start to add approaches that develop your body's capacity to run fast for another couple of weeks. But not too quick early on. "Start by incorporating 5-8 60m 'strides' — runs at about 70 per cent effort — during or after some of your steady runs," Craggs says. "Don't be tempted to go full pelt." When you feel comfortable with this, switch some of these efforts to an incline. "The idea is not to sprint up a hill at this stage but to see the incline runs as an extension of the efforts you were doing on flat ground." Continue adding these flat and incline efforts until week 5-6 of your training, when you can start to implement fancier methods.

> **"Most runners do relatively more at a high intensity than Olympians — a big mistake**

Add controlled speed with intervals and threshold sessions

As you get fitter, the key is not to get carried away with too much faster-paced running. Even if you run 5-6 times a week, one or two faster sessions every 7-10 days is initially enough. One of these can be intervals at just a bit quicker than your predicted 5km pace. Keep them short to begin with: try 10 x 40 seconds with no more than 60 seconds recovery jog between, building up to 10 x 90-second efforts as you get fitter. Alternate the session with some tempo running.

"Your threshold run pace should be at 70-80 per cent effort level or 80-90 per cent of your max heart rate. You need to develop an ability to control and manage this pace without pushing too hard," Craggs says. "Over time it helps you to run faster for longer."

Try 8 x 3 minutes at this pace taking 60-70 seconds for recovery or a continuous run of 12-16 minutes. On other days, keep up your steady running to build cardiovascular, muscular and mechanical endurance. "Never get away from the idea that 90 per cent of what you need for a faster 5km comes from being patient and gradually increasing the amount of steady-paced running that you do each week," Craggs says.

Experiment with fartlek

Fartlek, a Swedish term for speed play, is another option for your faster weekly session. Start by selecting markers on a run — sprint to a lamppost or tree, then jog to a gatepost, for example — or, if you prefer to use a watch, the 10-20-30 approach is an option — jog for 30 seconds, pick up to moderate speed for 20 seconds then sprint for 10 seconds and repeat 3-5 times for one set. As you get fitter, take a 2-4 minute jogging break and repeat the set a further 1-3 times. Don't go flat out.

A study from the University of Copenhagen found that runners performing the 10-second fast bursts at 80 per cent of top speed improved their 5k times by 42 seconds in six weeks. Those who did the sprints at full pelt shaved only 24 seconds off their times. "We think that it is related to the fact that training at 80 per cent of one's maximum still gets the heart rate up significantly higher than a runner's typical training," says co-author Professor Jens Bangsbo of the university's nutrition, exercise and sports department. "A higher heart rate leads to improvements in heart function and circulation, as evidenced in their times and fitness levels."

Do some run-specific strength training (but not too much)

While strength training is important for general health and to offset any muscular imbalances that predispose you to injury, it is unlikely to help you clock a faster 5km time. "To become a faster runner, you need to put in the running training," Craggs says.

Make sure any strength work is running specific. James Thie, a former international athlete, hosts a free weekly 30-minute endurance circuit (@teamthie on YouTube) or you can book an online consultation at Gracefull Running, where the European 800m medallist Becky Lyne will devise a tailored conditioning programme for you.

Get yourself a decent pair of trainers (or two)

Carbon-plated super shoes that cost upwards of £200 are popular at Parkruns. They act a bit like the plantar fascia underneath the foot, responding to applied force with greater forward and upward propulsion, says Dr Ceri Diss, a former international runner and a senior lecturer in biomechanics at the University of Roehampton. "They can shave off one second per kilometre for very fast runners, which would be a significant 42 seconds in a marathon. But slower runners tend to squash the carbon plate with less force so the effects are not quite the same."

Trainer studies have shown that wearing an ordinary running shoe with medium amounts of cushioning led to greater improvements in running economy — a measure of how efficiently the body uses oxygen and considered a strong predictor for endurance performance — among non-elites than the new breed of super-shoe.

Have a coffee before you run

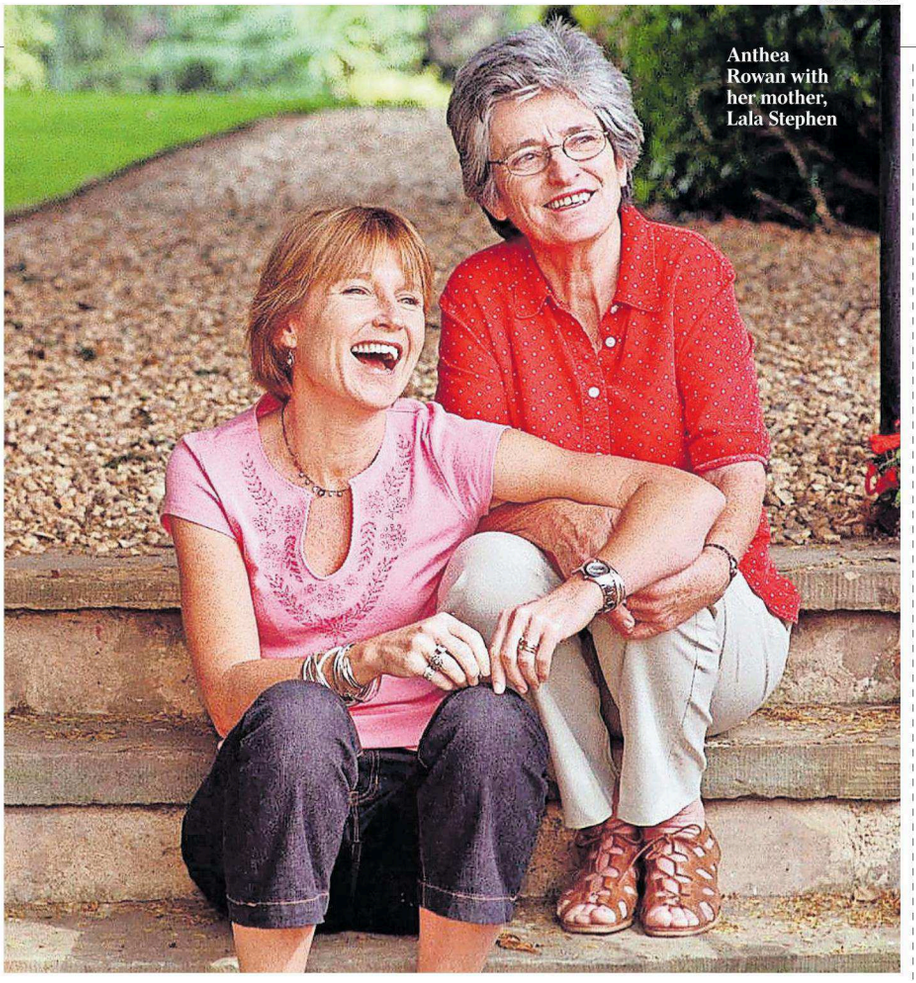
Social media promotes no end of products — from beetroot shots and blackcurrant extract to bicarb and creatine — claiming to help you go faster but a cup of black coffee will probably suffice.

A review conducted by leading sports scientists for World Athletics found that caffeine is one of only five supplements that might help to boost running performance so a pre-race espresso will do the trick for many (it worked for Mo Farah).

Not a coffee-drinker? Caffeinated gum chewed 30 minutes before the start of a Parkrun improved the performance of recreational runners by an average of 17 seconds according to researchers at Sheffield Hallam University. Caffeine in products such as Healthspan's Kickstart gum is absorbed quickly for faster results.

@pbracingsquad

ED MAYNARD/UNP



Anthea Rowan with her mother, Lala Stephen

Will HRT help me avoid my mother's long dementia?

A study shows my oestrogen-only prescription should protect me. But is it that clear-cut, asks Anthea Rowan

New research on the relationship between dementia risk and hormone replacement therapy is bound to attract attention. And the latest — this time from Stanford — grabs mine.

Women over 50 who used oestrogen-only hormone therapy were found to have 35 per cent lower odds of Alzheimer's pathology at autopsy.

That's me: over 50 and on this type of hormone therapy because I had a hysterectomy several years ago, so have no need of the uterus-protecting progesterone in a combined therapy.

Autopsy is "the gold standard for detecting Alzheimer's disease", the study authors — Jennifer Bruno, Hadi Hosseini and Jacob Shaw, who examined data from more than 21,000 women — told me.

But even gold comes with impurities — confounding factors that muddy the certainty of results. David Snowdon's "Nun's Study" is a case in point: a postmortem analysis of the brains of 678 nuns found that many were scribbled with amyloid plaques and tau tangles, the signatures of Alzheimer's. Yet some never exhibited signs of dementia in life.

The Stanford study also found participants had 39 per cent lower odds of being diagnosed with dementia, and lower odds of the memory and functional decline that precede it.

I watched dementia erase my mother — steal her stories, leave her incontinent, unable to walk or feed herself, to function independently on any level. I'll do anything to avoid the same devastation.

But that's not why I'm on oestrogen. I'm on it because I have osteopenia, a precursor to osteoporosis. "Your bones are worse than I'd expect for a woman your age," said the technician at my Dexa bone-density scan. When my gynaecologist recommended HRT, I balked: wouldn't I get breast cancer? "Your risk of breaking a hip is much greater," she said. When I broke a rib not long afterwards, I believed her.

Evidence from a number of studies suggests hormone therapy — and oestrogen specifically — could deliver brain benefit: it stops amyloid and tau from dangerous accumulation, supports synaptic connections which in turn support the brain's intricate messaging, and tamps down neuro-inflammation, the Stanford team explain.

My mother, who had a hysterectomy in her thirties for heavy periods — a complaint for which doctors would offer other options today — would have benefited from hormone therapy too. Not because it might have prevented dementia in the long term but because it would have alleviated hot flushes in the short.

Menopause is not a brief, uncomfortable period in a woman's life when she becomes red-faced and short-tempered. Menopause is a brain-driven transition that can last a decade and affects every part of a woman's body because it's strung with oestrogen receptors. You'd be amazed where you find them. Sure, in the ovaries, uterus, breasts, but also in the heart, blood vessels, bones, gut and skin — and, yup, the brain too.

Think of oestrogen as a key and those receptors as the lock into which it fits to turn a function on, or off, and you'll understand why menopause — and the loss of oestrogen — is the catalyst for up to 40 symptoms experienced by 80 per cent of women. They include those you might expect, such as vaginal dryness and loss of libido, but plenty you don't: heart palpitations, frozen shoulder, dry eyes. All those little locks for which the key no longer fits.

Hot flushes are especially common. Mum's persisted for years. Suddenly, face pink, she'd start to strip layers off: "God, I'm about to expire, is nobody else hot?" It was the Eighties. We didn't talk about menopause; my mother remained hot and bothered.

Brain imaging finds these surges of heat to the skin might expose a woman's brain to white matter hyper-intensities — tiny stroke-like lesions. And oestrogen might help prevent these too because it supports a healthy vasculature. The Stanford study found "lower rates of small-vessel changes" in the brains of participants.

> **Hormone therapy is just one piece of a much larger picture**

Did hot flushes cause vessel damage to Mum's brain? I'll never know. But I do know they continued to disrupt her sleep, the loss of which probably exacerbated frequent depressions, a significant risk for dementia. The lifetime risk for Alzheimer's in women is twice that of men. So is the risk of depression. Is that a coincidence?

The Stanford study isn't the first to explore the links between hormone therapy and dementia. It comes six months after a study by UCL which found no evidence that HRT increases, or decreases, dementia risk. Others find HRT use elevates risk.

Why the wild variations? It's a result of the differences in women studied and therapy used, Bruno explained: "Age, timing of initiation, formulation, route of administration, genetic risk (particularly if a woman is a carrier of the so-called Alzheimer's gene), baseline health, ethnicity..." These variables amount to nuance that gets lost in the polarisation around hormone therapy. Instead, headlines are manipulated on social media and the takeaway is reduced to either HRT saves your brain from "eating itself" or it dooms all women who use it to breast cancer. Or Alzheimer's.

The authors worked hard to adjust for confounders. "But observational data can only take us so far," Bruno said. Results aren't cast-iron proof, not in the way evidence for bone health is. It's why HRT is approved as a treatment for loss of bone density.

The Nun Study's confounding factor was how cognitively engaged nuns were in life. Sister Mary's brain was 25 per cent lighter than a healthy female brain and had three times the Alzheimer's pathology of other brains autopsied. Yet she was still achieving high cognitive test scores at the time of her death at 101.

So what might Stanford's confounding factor have been?

"It's possible that women who used hormone therapy differed from non-users in ways we couldn't fully measure, such as baseline health status or engagement with healthcare," the authors told me. Why does that matter? Better health engagement might mean women have a better understanding of health broadly and are better able to advocate for themselves.

The Women's Health Initiative study 25 years ago did women everywhere a disservice. Results were read for all women rather than focusing on the age of the women in the study — ten years post-menopause — and the type of therapy.

Consequently, and tragically, for years many women missed out on being prescribed a therapy which Dr Tom Blackmore, the research programmes manager at Alzheimer's Research UK, says "remains an important option for managing menopausal symptoms and may significantly improve quality of life for many people".

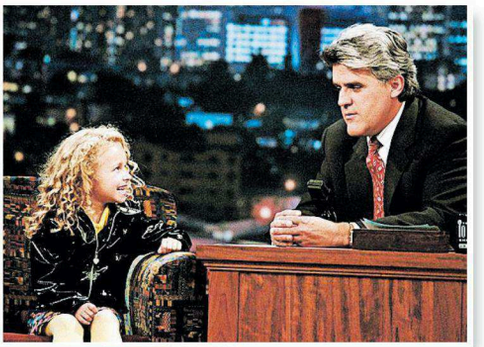
Quality of life — that's the key here. HRT is neither panacea nor poison. So it should not be presented, as Blackmore says, as a guarantee of preventing dementia, "or something women should fear". It's a drug that has been developed to treat some of the most troublesome symptoms of menopause — one that might help a woman sleep well enough to keep working, perhaps, or feel like socialising, or make her less likely to suffer depression, or stay free of joint pain so she remains active. That's where good brain health begins — look at the Lancet's modifiable risk factors for dementia prevention. As Bruno says, "the most important message is that dementia risk in women has many contributing factors, and hormone therapy is just one piece of a much larger picture that we're still working to understand".

Would hormone therapy have saved Mum from dementia? Who knows. But it would have improved her quality of life — that matters — and that might have extended the health of her brain at the same time. Will it save me? I don't know, but I do know it will protect my skeleton, which means if I fall I'll be less likely to break a hip and end up in hospital.

And that in itself could be a risk to my brain health, irrespective of whether I've used HRT or not.

‘When your image is so clean, the only place to go is down’

Hayden Panettiere spent a lifetime in the spotlight. Jane Mulkerrins recalls meeting the late star



Left: Hayden Panettiere and, above, on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno as a seven-year-old in 1996

I can often find it jarring to revisit old interviews, cringing at my ham-fisted phrasing or clunky observations. But rarely do I find it so sad to return to not just one but two interviews, which now read like grim prophecies.

The opening lines of my interview with Hayden Panettiere describe her bounding across a hotel bar in the late afternoon and urging, “You’re British, you’ll drink with me.” And so we ordered cocktails.

While the cause of Panettiere’s death at 36 has not been confirmed, the American actress previously spent several spells in rehab, for alcohol and opioid addictions, and in her memoir, *This Is Me: A Reckoning*, published earlier this year, she revealed that “a doctor told me that if I didn’t stop drinking, I’d be dead within five years”.

It was February 2013, in a hip hotel in downtown New York, where — such was her fame at the time — Panettiere was staying under a fake name. Still only 23, but having worked since she was a small child, she already felt like a veteran, and “in my mid-thirties, probably”, she told me.

Her mother, Lesley Vogel, a former soap actress herself, had signed her daughter up for acting and modelling jobs at four months old. She landed her first soap opera role aged four and acted throughout her childhood, with guest spots in shows such as *Ally McBeal* and *Malcolm in the Middle*. She was interviewed on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* — little legs dangling off the famous leather armchair — when she was seven.

“I definitely had to make sacrifices,” she told me. “Instead of playing with friends, I had to memorise my lines. I would go back to school [after filming] and have such a hard time fitting in with the kids my own age. For several years school was absolute torture.”

At 16 she was cast as Claire Bennet, a cheerleader with superpowers in the sci-fi series *Heroes*, rocketing her to fame and fortune, making her a millionaire while still in her teens. There was a handbag line, a contract as the face of the skincare brand Neutrogena, a Peta award for her animal rights work and even a campaign against teen pregnancy, all capitalising on her wholesome public image.

“When the image out there of you is so squeaky-clean, the only place you have to go is down,” Panettiere observed sagely.

Behind the scenes, however, she was — as she described in her memoir — being “groomed... like a little soldier” by the Hollywood machine. At 16, on the relentless promotional juggernaut of *Heroes*, one of her team gave her a “happy pill” to perk her up for the red carpet and interviews. Soon Panettiere was popping the pills — which she later believed to be amphetamines — regularly. “With this happy pill, I was a brand new Hayden,” she wrote.

She also described the ubiquitous paparazzi — “I was raw meat laid out for a bunch of hyenas to devour every single day” — and the endemic sexual exploitation of young women in the industry. “It was as close to being human trafficked as I have ever experienced,” she said of an incident on a superyacht (from which she fled).

At our meeting in New York, however, she was riding higher than ever, with a role in the popular new country music drama *Nashville*, for which she’d already been nominated for a Golden Globe. But it was hard work, she said, commenting with yet more horrible irony on the 16-hour shooting days. “Every time I used to read that so-and-so was in hospital from exhaustion, I would be like, ‘Yeah, drugs, rehab,’” she scoffed. “I now understand that you really could end up in hospital from exhaustion.”

Nonetheless she relished her role as the ambitious, conniving country music star Juliette Barnes. “I spent four years playing the good girl so I was desperate to play the bad girl,” she said. “She is a villain, yes, but she also comes from a dark past. She’s a very damaged girl and looking for love in all the wrong places.”

Panettiere herself had been looking for love mostly with men much older than her. She’d dated Milo Ventimiglia, her *Heroes* co-star and 12 years her senior, for two years, before meeting the Ukrainian boxing champion Wladimir Klitschko — 13 years her senior, and 6ft 6in to her 5ft 1in — at a party in 2009, and spent two years flying around the world to watch him fight. There was then a relationship with the NFL star Scotty McKnight, but by the time we met, she and Klitschko had reunited.

“People think it seems very strange from the outside, then they see the inner workings of it and they understand it,” she said of the relationship. She was even keen to settle down. “Oh yes, absolutely. I was born to be a mum,” she told me with enthusiasm. “I have always known that that was my end goal in life — that’s what I was built for.” Less than two years later, in December 2014, she gave birth to a daughter, Kaya, but fell into a deep postnatal depression soon after. In her memoir, she describes it as “a total blackout of emotion, like my soul was dead”, and Klitschko — by then her fiancé — as unsympathetic. “Just the concept of [postnatal depression] did not fit in his mind,” she said.

Panettiere with Wladimir Klitschko in 2013

Four months after her daughter’s birth Panettiere, who, according to her memoir had been self-medicating with wine and whisky, while taking benzodiazepines for anxiety, checked herself into rehab for the first time.

The following years brought a litany of horrors. In 2018 Panettiere signed full custody of Kaya over to Klitschko (she would later say that it “wasn’t fully my decision” and that “there wasn’t a whole heck of a lot” she could do to fight her former partner’s bid for custody). In 2020 she was admitted to rehab again, for eight months, and in 2021 her on-off boyfriend Brian Hickerson, a real estate agent, was sentenced to 45 days in prison for domestic abuse. In 2023 her younger brother Jansen died of an undiagnosed heart condition at 28.

In July 2024 I interviewed Klitschko — now 50 and a diplomatic envoy for Ukraine — along with his brother, Vitali, 55, a fellow former boxing champion, now the high-profile mayor of Kyiv. Across a vast conference table in Vitali’s office in Kyiv’s City Hall, the two huge, strapping brothers disarmed me with their openness. Vitali confessed that he sometimes gets lonely in the wake of his divorce from the model Natalija Jehorova, with whom he has three adult children, and praised his brother’s devotion as a father. “I’m a bad father but he is great — the best father I saw in my life,” he said solemnly.

Wladimir politely but repeatedly declined to discuss his daughter, or his relationship with Panettiere (“I will skip it — sensitive topic,” he said), but silently retrieved a note from his wallet to show me, written by his daughter, which read: “‘My dad is mother father to me.”

In an interview with The Sunday Times in May this year to promote her memoir, Panettiere spoke of having now forged a “really beautiful friendship” with Klitschko, and visiting their daughter as often as possible, though “not nearly as often as I wish”. Now 11, Kaya, she said, was already keen to read her mother’s memoir. “My daughter is a curious young lady,” she said with pride. “One day she’ll read it and I’ll be able to answer all her questions.”

times2

Your weekday brain boost

More puzzles
Pages 14-16

Every day, Monday to Thursday, a page of extra puzzles to give your brain an extended workout

Samurai medium

Fill each grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Where the puzzles overlap, the rows and columns do not go beyond their usual length.

8		1				5							5	1						4
		5	2				9	4					2			7				
		4		3	5	1						3		4	1		5			2
	5	8	4		3		2						9			6	4	1		
	3	9				4	8							6	8		7	9		
	4		9		6	3	5							8	9	2			4	
		6	3	4					7						5		9	2		7
5	9				7									7		4			1	
		3						6	4	3								4	8	
						1			5		3		7	4						
						7								9						
						3	6		1		4			8						
	4	1								4	6	7						5		
	7			2		4									2				9	4
5		2	1		9						5					9	3	6		
	1			9	2	7							7	8	1		2		3	
		5	4		7	1							1	9				4	5	
		6	3	1			8						2		4		9	7	1	
3			2		4	9		6						5	9	4		3		
				3			4					9	8				6	1		
4						3	7							4				2		9

Sudoku fiendish

8								
	6	9				3		
2			3	9			8	
	5		1	8				
		3			5	9		
	8	6			4	1		
		1	8	4			6	
			5		7		9	
						2		3

Killer tricky

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

22			10		18	7		
3	8			20			25	
	13		17		9			12
7					15			
22		9			19			
14			13	9	15		4	
	9				3		14	22
11	3	14	15	18				
					5			

Train Tracks

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

Futoshiki

Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

□		2		□		□		□
								∧
□	<	□		□		□		□
				∨				∧
□	<	5		□	>	□		□
∧				∧				
□		□		□	<	□		□
□	<	□		□		□	<	□

Sakuro

Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

Play Mini Sudoku every day Monday-Sunday online at thetimes.com and on Live app

Codeword

Every letter in the crossword-style grid, right, is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded.

■	8 B	11	25	25	12	19	6	■	14	16	24	7
26	■	10	■	■	■	24	■	7	■	9	■	9
9	23	25	9	15	18	6	■	4	4	7	11	4
11	■	12	■	12	■	25	■	25	■	10	■	5
8	25	12	19 W	23	■	24	2	24	17	4	5	■
8	■	■	■	15	■	6	■	13	■	12	■	14
25	24	16	1	4	5	■	20	24	9	23	15	1
4	■	1	■	7	■	15	■	14	■	■	■	4
■	3	12	14	14	4	7	■	11	23	22	4	7
25	■	19	■	11 I	■	24	■	12	■	11	■	2
12	15	4	24	23	■	21	24	23	11	25	25	24
10	■	7	■	24	■	24	■	■	■	14	■	25
12	23	6	13	■	16	14	24	7	15	1	6	■

A ~~B~~ C D E F G H ~~I~~ J K L M N O P Q R S T U V ~~W~~ X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 B	9	10	11 I	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19 W	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Mini Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x2 box contains the digits 1 to 6

		1			3
	5			1	
1			2		5
2			1		4
	1			5	
		4			1

Solutions in tomorrow's Times2

Yesterday's solutions

SAMURAI

2	5	7	8	3	9	6	1	4				3	8	1	7	9	4	5	2	6
9	3	4	6	7	1	5	2	8				7	5	4	2	3	6	9	1	8
6	8	1	4	5	2	9	3	7				6	9	2	8	1	5	7	4	3
5	7	8	2	6	3	1	4	9				1	4	6	9	7	3	8	5	2
3	9	6	7	1	4	2	8	5				8	2	7	5	6	1	4	3	9
4	1	2	5	9	8	7	6	3				9	3	5	4	2	8	6	7	1
7	2	5	3	8	6	4	9	1	2	6	8	5	7	3	1	8	9	2	6	4
8	4	9	1	2	7	3	5	6	7	9	4	2	1	8	6	4	7	3	9	5
1	6	3	9	4	5	8	7	2	5	1	3	4	6	9	3	5	2	1	8	7
						7	4	3	9	8	2	6	5	1						
						2	6	9	1	3	5	8	4	7						
						5	1	8	4	7	6	9	3	2						
9	8	5	3	1	4	6	2	7	3	5	9	1	8	4	7	6	2	9	5	3
6	7	3	5	9	2	1	8	4	6	2	7	3	9	5	4	1	8	7	6	2
1	4	2	6	8	7	9	3	5	8	4	1	7	2	6	9	3	5	4	8	1
4	2	8	1	6	5	7	9	3				9	4	2	6	5	7	1	3	8
3	5	9	2	7	8	4	1	6				8	1	3	2	4	9	6	7	5
7	6	1	4	3	9	8	5	2				5	6	7	3	8	1	2	4	9
5	1	6	9	4	3	2	7	8				4	3	1	5	9	6	8	2	7
8	3	4	7	2	1	5	6	9				6	7	9	8	2	3	5	1	4
2	9	7	8	5	6	3	4	1				2	5	8	1	7	4	3	9	6

SAKURO

MINI SUDOKU

1	4	6	3	2	5
5	2	3	4	1	6
4	3	5	2	6	1
2	6	1	5	4	3
6	5	2	1	3	4
3	1	4	6	5	2

TRAIN TRACKS

FUTOSHIKI

1		5		4		2		3
∧						∧		
2	<	4	<	5		3		1
		∨				∧		
3		2		1		4		5
				∧				
5		3		2		1	<	4
∨								∨
4		1	<	3		5		2

SUDOKU

3	2	5	8	4	6	7	1	9
8	9	6	2	7	1	4	3	5
4	7	1	5	9	3	8	2	6
5	6	4	1	8	7	3	9	2
9	1	2	4	3	5	6	8	7
7	3	8	6	2	9	5	4	1
1	8	3	7	6	2	9	5	4
6	5	9	3	1	4	2	7	8
2	4	7	9	5	8	1	6	3

KILLER

9	2	3	5	7	1	6	8	4
1	8	5	9	6	4	2	7	3
6	4	7	2	3	8	1	9	5
7	1	2	3	8	6	5	4	9
5	9	6	7	4	2	3	1	8
8	3	4	1	9	5	7	6	2
4	5	9	6	2	7	8	3	1
2	7	8	4	1	3	9	5	6
3	6	1	8	5	9	4	2	7

CODEWORD

W	H	I	M	S	I	C	A	L	■	S	■	S
■	O	■	A	■	G	■	L	■	H	A	K	E
D	O	O	R	K	N	O	B	■	■	F	■	V
■	T	■	J	■	O	■	U	R	B	A	N	E
M	E	M	O	■	B	■	M	■	■	R	■	R
■	R	■	R	E	L	Y	■	S	E	I	Z	E
A	■	■	A	■	Y	■	B	■	Q	■	■	D
G	R	I	M	Y	■	M	E	N	U	■	R	■
A	■	M	■	■	I	■	W	■	I	T	E	M
I	N	B	O	R	N	■	I	■	P	■	F	■
N	■	U	■	■	C	A	T	A	P	U	L	T
S	P	E	D	■	U	■	C	■	E	■	E	■
T	■	D	■	O	R	T	H	O	D	O	X	Y

A murky story of toxic chemicals in Wales

Carol Midgley
TV review

Buried with Michael Sheen
BBC2
★★★★☆

It would be nice to say that *Buried with Michael Sheen* left me agog at the cynicism of which some global companies are allegedly capable. However, the depressing truth is that people have become so wearily accustomed to some of the big industries' casual disregard for human and animal health that little shocks. Though let's be clear: this is an excellent two-parter and Sheen is a passionate activist fully invested in this issue. As you'd expect from an actor, he is a great communicator.

The invisible monster at the centre of the documentary is polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) — so-called for ever chemicals — which decades ago were dumped in huge quantities in south Wales before being banned in 1981. The investigation began with the campaigner Douglas Gowan seeing a deformed calf with no genitals in an area close to a dumping site in 1967, then devoting a lifetime to exposing the harm he said such chemicals were doing to the water, air, soil and food supply. Many years later, when Gowan was terminally ill, Sheen spent two days filming him giving his evidence, which has been investigated by the environmental journalists Dan Ashby and Lucy Taylor.

There were accounts of children playing in the quarries and sites in the Seventies and Eighties, some paddling in the toxic "jelly" while not knowing what it was, others shooting with airguns at discarded rusting barrels that released "powder". Though it is decades since PCBs were banned, a stream in Cheshire near a dumping site still develops strange orange froth. Whichever way you look at it, that doesn't sound good, does it?

There have been strange clusters of cancer and illness. It was the same in Anniston, Alabama, where the company Monsanto had a chemical plant. After litigation, the film said, it paid $300 million to the community in a settlement. Since PCBs don't break down, it is believed they can be passed from mother to baby. In that area they still see babies born with deformities, such as intestines outside their bodies.

It is an ugly, murky story. One of Sheen's comments, from episode two, stood out for being horribly plausible, even if unproved. He said that if you wanted to be cynical about it you could almost say the company was choosing places, such as former coalmining areas, where any chronic health issues that arose might be hidden by pre-existing ones. So did they choose working-class industrial areas as a sort of camouflage?

The laboratory sampling tests on soil and water were shocking. Many decades on, one site had levels 160 times higher than the national average. At another, the levels were nearly 2,000 times the average.

In episode two you will see the response the company now in charge of Monsanto's former sites had to all this: silence. "Eastman Chemical Company, responsible for Monsanto's legacy production sites in the UK, did not respond to our request for comment" read the words on screen. Quotes from a local council and the environmental regulator for Wales said something about it not meeting the "legal definition" for contaminated land. Public Health Wales cautioned, reasonably, against extrapolating too much from "such small area analyses". It doesn't sound like anything is going to be done about it, does it?

WALL TO WALL /BBC

The actor Michael Sheen proved an able and passionate activist

Radio choice

Drama: No, Prime Minister
Radio 4, 2.15pm

Mark Burgess's comedy drama is based on the moment in 1984 when the *Yes, Minister* fangirl Margaret Thatcher (Fenella Woolgar) appeared in a radio sketch based on the sitcom. The cast were not delighted since the idea was engineered by Mary Whitehouse's campaigning body and the sketch was to be written by Thatcher's advisers. It's painfully clear that, despite them being desperate to show her sense of humour, she really doesn't have one. The *Yes, Minister* stars Paul Eddington, Nigel Hawthorne and Derek Fowlds are played by Miles Jupp, Richard Attlee and James Joyce. *Clair Woodward*

Times Radio

Digital, web, smart speaker, app

5.00am Tom Nunan **6.00** Rosie Wright and Stig Abell with Breakfast **10.00** Hugo Rifkind **1.00pm** Jo Coburn **2.00** Jane Garvey **4.00** Carolyn Quinn with Drive **7.00** Darryl Morris with The Evening Edition **10.00** Olly Mann **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

Radio 2

FM: 88-90.2 MHz

6.30am Sara Cox **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** DJ Spoony **4.00** Jason Manford **7.00** Prom Nights **9.00** Jamie Cullum **10.00** Melvin Odoom **12.00** OJ Borg **3.00am** Dance Sounds of the 90s (r) **4.00** Owain Wyn Evans

Radio 3

FM: 90.2-92.4 MHz

6.30am Breakfast
9.30 Essential Classics
1.00pm Classical Live
Linton Stephens introduces highlights from the 2026 Proms. Edinburgh International Festival: Vivaldi (Concerto for 2 cellos in G minor, RV. 531); BBC Proms: Mozart (*Masonic Funeral Music*); Edinburgh International Festival: Holmès (*Pareil a la mer profonde; Le Vin*); BBC Proms: Gershwin (Piano Concerto in F); JS Bach (Toccata & Fugue in D minor, BWV. 56); Summer Festivities of Early Music, Prague: Crecquillon (*Andreas Christi famulus*); Carinthian Summer Music Festival, Austria Beethoven (Symphony No 5 in C minor, Op 67); Edinburgh International Festival: Connie Converse (*Cassandra Cycle* – excerpts); and Edinburgh International Festival: Vivaldi (Flute Concerto in C, RV. 443)
4.00 Composer of the Week: Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Kate Molleson follows Mendelssohn's first visit to London, a city he would come to adore, and his rise to celebrity status
5.00 In Tune
7.00 Live BBC Proms 2026
The BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Cristian Macelaru perform Shostakovich's masterly Symphony No 10, plus Édith Canat de Chizy's *Skyline*. Presented by Hannah French, live from the Royal Albert Hall, London.
Édith Canat de Chizy (*Skyline* – Concerto for three percussionists, timpani and orchestra – BBC co-commission: UK premiere).
7.20 Interval **7.40** Shostakovich (Symphony No 10 in E minor)
10.00 Night Tracks
11.30 'Round Midnight
Gretchen Parlato spotlights an American singer-songwriter and guitarist. Soweto Kinch presents
12.30am Through the Night

Radio 4

FM: 92.4-94.6 MHz

5.00am News Summary
5.04 Pride Before the Fall (r)
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
6.00 Today
9.00 Invisible Hands
The academic who led America to disaster in Vietnam (4/7)
9.30 Michael Sheen Gets into Character
Michael Sheen explores the methods used by actors to get into character (1/3) (r)
10.00 Woman's Hour
11.00 Add to Playlist
Soweto Kinch and NoLay select five tracks by black British music artists (1/6) (r)
11.45 Book of the Week: The Fire in the Mountain – Sicily, Etna and her People (2/5)
12.04pm Call You and Yours
1.00 The World at One
1.45 Human Intelligence
The work of Salvador Dali (2/10)
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Choice Drama: No, Prime Minister
Comedy drama, by Mark Burgess
3.00 Lady on Trial with Lucy Worsley
Lucy and guests review the final four cases of the series (10/10)
3.30 Heart and Soul (r)
4.00 The Deadliest Book in England
Susie Dent investigates a book that shaped history and language
4.30 What's Up Docs?
5.00 PM
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Paul Sinha's Perfect Pub Quiz
Paul presents from the Black Box Theatre in Belfast (2/6)
7.00 The Archers
Susan puts her foot in it
7.15 Front Row
8.00 Saving Young Men from Murder: The Homeboy Story
A visit to the largest gang rehabilitation charity in the world
8.40 In Touch
9.00 Crossing Continents
The work of New York's antiques trafficking unit (3/9)
9.30 Scam Secrets (3/8) (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
10.45 Book at Bedtime: Mr Sidhu's Post Office (2/10)
11.00 Wild Inside (4/4) (r)
11.30 Poetry Please (r)
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Book of the Week: The Fire in the Mountain: Sicily, Etna and her People (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Radio 4 Extra

Digital only

8.00am Whatever Happened to Baby Jane Austen? **8.30** Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years **8.45** Agnes Grey **9.00** Paul Sinha's Perfect Pub Quiz **9.30** The Essay: British Film Comedians **9.45** Daily Service **10.00** A Good Read **10.30** Happy Birthday Neptune **11.00** The Wolf Far Hence **11.30** The Senior Partner **12.00** Yes Minister **12.30pm** The Milligan Papers **1.00** Whatever Happened to Baby Jane Austen? **1.30** Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years **1.45** Agnes Grey **2.00** Hoax! **2.30** Life in London **3.00** A Pair of Blue Eyes **4.00** A Good Read **4.30** Happy Birthday Neptune **5.00** The Wolf Far Hence **5.30** The Senior Partner **6.00** Yes Minister **6.30** The Milligan Papers **7.00** Whatever Happened to Baby Jane Austen? **7.30** Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years **7.45** Agnes Grey **8.00** Hoax! **8.30** Life in London **9.00** A Pair of Blue Eyes **10.00** Comedy Club: Paul Sinha's Perfect Pub Quiz **10.30** Pick-Ups **11.00** All the World's a Globe **11.15** 2000 Years of Radio **11.30** Chain Reaction

Radio 5 Live

MW: 693, 909

5.00am Wake Up to Money **6.00** 5 Live Breakfast **9.00** Rima Ahmed **11.00** Holly Hamilton **2.00pm** Marianna Spring **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** 5 Live Sport **7.30** 5 Live Sport **9.30** Test Match Special **10.00** Punch Perfect **10.30** Qasa Alom **1.00am** Dotun Adebayo

talkSPORT

MW: 1053, 1089 kHz

5.00am Early Sports Breakfast **6.00** Breakfast with Jeff Stelling **10.00** Jim White and Simon Jordan **1.00pm** Hawksbee and Jacobs **4.00** talkSPORT Drive **7.00** Kick Off **10.00** The Sports Bar **1.00am** Extra Time with Paul Ross

Talk

Digital only

6.00am Jeremy Kyle **10.00** Julia Hartley Brewer **1.00pm** Ian Collins **4.00** Kevin O'Sullivan **7.00** Peter Cardwell **10.00** Petrie Hosken **1.00am** Paul Ross

6 Music

Digital only

5.00am Chris Hawkins **7.00** Nick Grimshaw **10.00** Lauren Laverne **1.00pm** Craig Charles **4.00** Huw Stephens **7.00** New Music Fix Daily **9.00** Riley & Coe **11.00** 6 Music Artist in Residence: Shygirl. Bjork, Caroline Polachek and Sevdaliza **12.00** 6 Music's Indie Forever **1.00am** From Mento to Lovers' Rock **2.00** From Mento to Lovers' Rock **3.00** 6 Music Live Hour **4.00** The 6 Music Playlist

Virgin Radio

Digital only

6.30am The Chris Evans Breakfast Show **10.00** Emma B **2.00pm** Ben Jones **6.00** Will MacDonald **10.00** Goldierocks **2.00am** Steve Denyer

Classic FM

FM: 100-102 MHz

6.30am Tim Lihoreau **9.00** The Hall of Fame Hour **10.00** Aled Jones **1.00pm** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00** Margherita Taylor **7.00** Relaxing Evenings with John Brunning **9.00** Composer Carousel with John Brunning **10.00** Calm Classics **1.00am** Bill Overton **4.00** Early Breakfast

television

PICKS OF THE DAY

The Great ADHD Myth?
Channel 4, 8pm

Already the subject of an open letter from the charity ADHD UK, which decried the damage the title of this documentary might cause "before a single frame is broadcast", the good faith of this investigation by Dr Max Pemberton has been called into question. As an NHS psychiatrist, writer and broadcaster he is concerned that "ten years ago ADHD was relatively rare in children and it was hardly ever seen in adults. Now it's estimated that over 2.5 million people in the UK have it." Even Andy Burnham has commented on the burden associated payments are placing on the benefits system. The film focuses on children including the lively ten-year-old Mason, who has been medicated for two years. His prescription has had a positive effect on his schoolwork but the child is aware that it "takes my funness away". **Helen Stewart**

Dr Max Pemberton, The Great ADHD Myth?, Channel 4, 8pm

Celebrity MasterChef
BBC1, 9pm

Grace Dent slinks into the studio with the air of a strong-jawed woman who has seen off every challenger and now reigns, resplendent in green silk, as the queen of the *MasterChef* kitchen. Even the five assembled star competitors gasp from behind their benches — Joe Pasquale, the comedian for hire recently seen dropping Brian Conley and his daughter off at Stansted airport on Channel 4's *Celebrity Hunted*, the sports journalist Jason Mohammad, the Olympic and Commonwealth medal-winning weightlifter Emily Campbell, the perpetually adorable *Love Island* contestant Shakira Khan and the former pop star and *Strictly Come Dancing* winner Jay McGuiness. They know when they're being outshone. At Dent's side, "one of my fave chefs. He's from Italy, he's a Michelin star master and our new *MasterChef* judge, Mr Giorgio Locatelli." Long live the new regime. **HS**

BBC1

6.00am Breakfast
9.30 Countryfile Treasures (r)
10.30 Garden Rescue. Creating a Moroccan-inspired courtyard garden (r)
11.15 Homes Under the Hammer (AD)
12.15pm Bargain Hunt (r) (AD)
1.00 BBC News at One; Weather
1.35 BBC Regional News; Weather
1.45 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 Money for Nothing. Sarah Moore plans to repurpose an old storage unit
2.45 Escape to the Country. Jules Hudson helps a couple find a home in Herefordshire
3.30 The Repair Shop. Experts restore an elephant puppet that survived a fire, a watch that belonged to a pilot in the Second World War, a sign from a race track and a hurling stick from the 1980s (r) (AD)
4.30 The Answer Run. Jason Manford hosts
5.15 Pointless. Quiz show hosted by Alexander Armstrong and Nish Kumar (r)
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 BBC Regional News; Weather

7.00 The One Show Presented by Roman Kemp and Lauren Laverne

7.30 EastEnders George and Nicola continue to deal with the escalated situation, and Penny is reluctant to accept Vinny's support (AD)

8.00 The Great British Sewing Bee Sophie Willan hosts children's week with the contestants following a pattern for a tutu, creating made-to-measure superhero outfits and repurposing fleece into cuddly toys (6/10) (AD)

9.00 Celebrity MasterChef New series. The comedian Joe Pasquale, the broadcaster Jason Mohammad, the weightlifter Emily Campbell, the reality star Shakira Khan and the actor-singer Jay McGuiness compete. *See picks of the day* (AD)

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.30 BBC Regional News and Weather
10.40 FILM: The Untouchables (15, 1987) An incorruptible federal agent forms an elite squad to bring gangster Al Capone's control of the underworld to an end. Brian De Palma's crime thriller, with Kevin Costner, Robert De Niro, Andy Garcia and Sean Connery. *See film choice*

12.35am The Hit List Marvin and Rochelle Humes present as best friends from Liverpool, a married couple from Swansea, and a father and son-in-law from Pontefract take part in the music-based quiz show (r) **1.25-6.00** BBC News. The latest headlines

BBC2

6.30am Escape to the Country (r)
7.15 Money for Nothing (r)
8.00 Sign Zone: The Great British Sewing Bee (r) (AD, SL)
9.00 BBC News
1.00pm Richard Osman's House of Games. Nina Conti, Nick Helm, Athena Kugblenu and Toby Tarrant take part in the quiz show (r)
1.30 The Finish Line. Quiz show (r)
2.15 Do You Know Your Place? (r)
2.45 Animal Park Summer. A pygmy goat goes into labour unexpectedly (r) (AD)
3.30 Serengeti II. The animals struggle to reach higher ground after a flood (r) (AD)
4.30 Vintage Antiques Roadshow. From Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire (r)
5.15 Flog It! From Guildford Cathedral (r)
6.00 Richard Osman's House of Games. With former winners Edith Bowman, Rhys James, Anita Rani and Simon Rimmer (r)
6.30 Bear Grylls: Wild Reckoning. A father and his 28-year-old son are put to the test in the wilderness (r) (AD)

7.00 Nigellissima Featuring a recipe for pork loin stuffed with oregano and Parma ham (3/6) (r) (AD)

7.30 Race Against the Tide New series. Sand sculpting competition, presented by Iain Stirling (1/6) (AD)

8.00 Saving Lives at Sea New series. The Porthcawl crew responds to a 999 call about a fisherman who has fallen overboard and there are reports of a dangerously overcrowded small boat in the shipping lanes of the English Channel (1/10) (AD)

9.00 Emergency 24/7 New series. A look at the emergency department at Southmead Hospital, Bristol, revealing the everyday pressures as well as the teamwork required to keep the department running. *See picks of the day* (1/6) (AD)

10.00 Live at the Apollo Stephen Bailey, Lara Ricote and Glenn Moore perform stand-up (6/7) (r)

10.30 Newsnight Headline analysis presented by Faisal Islam

11.05 The Vampire Lestat: Interview with the Vampire Lestat records his "posthumous" album (5/7) (AD)

11.55 The Vampire Lestat: Interview with the Vampire (6/7) (AD)

12.50am Sign Zone: Uncanny The case of a student house believed to be haunted by a malevolent entity. Last in the series (r) (AD, SL) **1.50-2.35** Captive Audience: A Real American Horror Story. Charting the kidnapping of a seven-year-old in 1972 and his return seven years later (r) (AD, SL)

ITV1

6.00am Good Morning Britain
10.00 This Morning. A mix of celebrity chat, lifestyle features and advice
1.30pm ITV News; Weather
2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal. David Dickinson and the team visit Telford's International Centre, where Stewart Hofgartner makes a bid for a tiny camera and Tony Geering is tempted by a pair of timepieces (r) (AD)
3.00 Deal or No Deal. Stephen Mulhern hosts as another contestant tries to open the 22 red boxes in the right order, taking on the infamous Banker for the chance to win a life-changing cash prize (r) (AD)
4.00 Tipping Point. Ben Shephard hosts the arcade-themed quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning a £10,000 jackpot (r)
5.00 The Chase. Bradley Walsh presents as contestants from London, Truro, Edinburgh and Mill Hill take on one of the Chasers (r)
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV News; Weather

7.30 Inside the Langham: Britain's First Grand Hotel Reception supervisor Rodrigo welcomes a dancing idol of his (5/6) (AD)

8.00 Emmerdale Joe has a surprise for everyone, while Billy is terrified at what Dawn might be capable of as paranoia grips them both (AD)
8.30 Coronation Street Kit leaves Sarah to deal with Kacey's threat (AD)

9.00 True Crime Presents: No Escape — Married to a Stalker A look at the crimes of Janbaz Tarin, who went on the run after murdering his ex-partner Raneem Oudeh and her mother Khaola Saleem in August 2018 (AD)

10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather; followed by Regional News

10.45 FILM: Octopussy (PG, 1983) James Bond investigates the mysterious death of a fellow agent in East Berlin and uncovers a plot to start a third world war. Spy adventure starring Roger Moore and Maud Adams (AD)

1.10am Shop on TV 3.00 The Summit. Dockers tries to enlist fellow climbers into a secret group (r) (AD, SL) **3.50** Unwind with ITV **5.05-6.00** Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace — What Happened Next. Following up the stories of foundlings Susanne Barrow and Tom Yeo (r) (AD, SL)

Channel 4

6.30am The King of Queens (r) (AD)
7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond (r) (AD)
9.10 Frasier (r) (AD)
11.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (r)
12.05pm Channel 4 News Summary
12.10 Find It, Fix It, Flog It. Henry and Simon meet a man in Gloucestershire who has been collecting since childhood (r) (AD)
1.10 The Great House Giveaway. Two wannabe property developers try to transform a dated terraced house (r)
2.10 Countdown. With Debbie McGee
3.00 A Place in the Sun. Ben Hillman helps a couple who dream of owning a holiday home on the sunny southern Costa Blanca (r)
4.00 The Great B&B Challenge. Dodgy cooking at breakfast leaves one pair with egg on their faces (r)
5.00 Château DIY. At the imposing Chateau de la Boutiniere there are teething problems with an old digger (r) (AD)
6.00 American Pickers. A Virginia bluegrass legend has some valuable mementos (r) (AD)

7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 The Great ADHD Myth? Psychiatrist and writer Max Pemberton challenges conventional thinking about ADHD, to investigate if the rise in diagnoses is down to genuine disorder or a result of other traits. *See picks of the day* (AD)

9.00 Celebrity Hunted The hunters track two of the celebrity runners to a Leeds bar. Broadcasting legend Gloria Hunniford provides a safe haven for two fugitives in need. And the hunters close in on a capture in Scotland (AD)

10.00 Gogglebox The armchair critics share their opinions on shows including *I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!*, *Squid Game: The Challenge*, *All Her Fault* and *Celebrity Race Across the World* (r) (AD)

11.05 Secret Lives of Gypsy Wives Trewley's first rap song enjoys mixed success, and her Christmas present for her mum misfires, so she tries to make up for it by taking her to speed dating (r) (AD)

12.05am Building Monaco's Superhomes (r) (AD, SL) **1.05** Ramsay's Hotel Hell (r) (AD, SL) **1.55** The Piano (r) (AD, SL) **2.45 FILM: Omen (15, 2023)** Drama starring Marc Zinga (SL) **4.20** Couples Come Dine with Me (r) (SL) **5.15** A Place in the Sun (r) **5.45** Sunday Brunch (r) **5.50-6.30** Countdown (r)

5

6.00am Milkshake!
9.15 Jeremy Vine
11.30 Storm & Alexis
12.45pm 5 News at Lunchtime
12.50 Matt Allwright
2.20 FILM: Living Next To Danger (PG, TVM, 2023) A woman's daughter goes missing and suspicion falls on her new neighbours. Thriller starring Kristi Murdock
4.00 Castle. Beckett, Castle and the team investigate when the creator of a hit sketch comedy series is strangled with his own tie and thrown down a lift shaft. Crime drama starring Nathan Fillion (r)
4.55 Love Nature. A London forager seeks the perfect pizza topping in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park (r)
5.00 5 News with Dan Walker
6.00 Gibraltar: Jewel of the Med. A profile of the peninsula located on the southern coast of Spain, a British overseas territory for more than 300 years (r)
6.55 5 News Update

7.00 Police Interceptors Several officers join in the pursuit of two men in a van, who are racing through four counties and ramming multiple police cars along the way (r)

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders An uninsured Mercedes van refuses to stop on the M6, leading officers on a dangerous pursuit before patrols force it off the road and arrest the suspected drink-driver

9.00 The Georgians with Rob Rinder & Ruth Goodman Rob and Ruth look at the coronation of King George IV in 1820 — one of the most lavish and controversial royal events in British history. *See picks of the day*

10.30 James Bulger: The Trial The story of the murder trial of Jon Venables and Robert Thompson, the two 10-year-old killers of toddler James Bulger. With contributions from the prosecution and defence teams (r)

12.05am Serial Killer Wives (r) (AD) **1.00** Cruise TV with LoveitBookit (r) **2.00** GPs: Behind Closed Doors (r) **2.50** Castle (r) **3.40** Friends (r) **4.30** The Highland Vet (r) (SL) **5.25** Entertainment News on 5 **5.35** Paw Patrol (r) (SL) **5.45-6.00** The Adventures of Paddington (r) (SL)

television

Emergency 24/7
BBC2, 9pm

Fly-on-the-wall documentaries always remind us how stunningly unflappable NHS staff can be. This one follows A&E at Southmead Hospital in Bristol, where Jamie, the trauma team leader, likens the flow of patients to a game of Jenga. On this particular Friday night a young motorcyclist comes in with spinal damage after a crash, while a horse rider needs stitches after receiving a hoof to the face. **Emma Bullimore**

The Georgians with Rob Rinder & Ruth Goodman
5, 9pm

Rob Rinder and the historian Ruth Goodman continue their *Rich Lives, Poor Lives* series by taking us back to 1821, to the coronation of King George IV. Even by royal standards he was a monarch who loved to splash the cash — his fancy velvet robes cost £27 million in today's money. But life wasn't so luxe for his hard-up subjects, who toiled relentlessly behind the scenes. **EB**

STREAMING CHOICE

The Goodies
YouTube

The recent death of the comedian and conservationist Bill Oddie saw an outpouring of love from fans who grew up with his grumpy, avuncular presence. The main reason for that was his part in the surreal 1970s TV show *The Goodies*, alongside his fellow anarchic altruists Graeme Garden and Tim Brooke-Taylor. Sadly the series is not streaming anywhere but YouTube has a wealth of material including 1973's Christmas special, an episode of *Comedy Connections* and *An Audience with the Goodies*, in which the comedian Stewart Lee interviews the trio about the show's highs and lows. **Andrew Male**

FILM CHOICE

The Untouchables (15, 1987)
BBC1, 10.40pm

Brian De Palma shows his customary flair with this stylish account of a feud between the mobster Al Capone (Robert De Niro) and the lawman Eliot Ness (Kevin Costner). Because of the corruption that eats away the heart of the law enforcement agencies of the 1920s, Ness handpicks an elite team of clean cops to help bring the gangster to justice. Sean Connery won an Oscar for playing the Irish cop who forms an integral part of the Ness squad. Prohibition-era Chicago is riddled with bullets by the end. (1l9min) **Wendy Ide**

BBC4

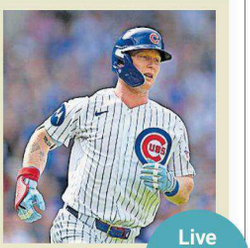
7.00pm The Architecture the Railways Built (4/10) (AD) **7.45** The Flying Gardener **8.00** To the Manor Born **8.30** Keeping Up Appearances **9.00** On Camera: Photographers at the BBC. Great modern photographers **10.00** Britain in Focus: A Photographic History. Eamonn McCabe explores the development of photography in the UK, beginning by looking at how science and technology allowed the creation of a new art form in the 1800s (AD) **11.00** The Secret Genius of Plants. The first in a two-part documentary exploring the world of plants (AD) **11.55** Deep, Down and Dirty: The Science of Soil. Documentary **12.50am** Britain in Focus: A Photographic History (AD) **1.50** The Flying Gardener **2.05am-3.05** On Camera: Photographers at the BBC

Sky Arts

8.10am Artist of the Year (AD) **9.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **10.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** Discovering: Rod Steiger (AD) **12.00** The Art of Film with Ian Nathan (AD) **1.00pm** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **2.00** The Alfred Hitchcock Hour **3.00** The Nineties **4.00** Discovering: Gina Lollobrigida (AD) **5.00** Portrait Artist of the Year (AD) **6.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **7.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.00** The World in a Painting: Manet's Lamps **9.15** Art Traffickers: Treasures Stolen from the Tombs (AD) **10.15** Wonderland: Gothic (AD) **11.15** The Movies **12.15am** Miyazaki: Spirit of Nature (AD) **1.50-4.00 FILM: Catching Fire — The Story of Anita Pallenberg (15, 2023)** Documentary about the Italian actress and artist

More4

8.55am Find It, Fix It, Flog It (AD) **10.00** Four in a Bed **12.40pm** Come Dine with Me **3.20** Four in a Bed **5.50** Car SOS (AD) **6.50** Car SOS. A Renault 5 GT Turbo (AD) **7.55** Grand Designs. Kevin McCloud meets a Spanish architect and his wife as they embark on a mission to convert a Grade II-listed folly into a family home in Buckinghamshire (1/7) (AD) **9.00** PopMaster TV. New series. Ken Bruce hosts the music quiz **10.00** 24 Hours in A&E. An 89-year-old man is admitted with acute abdominal pain (AD) **11.05** 24 Hours in A&E. A motorcyclist is airlifted to St George's after crashing into a bus and being thrown under a car (AD) **12.05am** 999: On the Front Line **1.10** 24 Hours in A&E (AD) **3.20am-3.50** A Place in the Sun



Live sport today

Chicago Cubs outfielder Pete Crow-Armstrong

Live Cycling — Men
TNT Sports 1, 1.30pm-4.00
Coverage of stage one of the Tour of Limousin, a 174.9km route that starts in Veyrac and ends in Dun-le-Palestel

Live Tennis
Sky Sports Tennis, 4pm-12midnight
The Cincinnati Open. Coverage of day six of the joint ATP 1000 and WTA 1000 event, a hard-court tournament at Lindner Family Tennis Center in Mason, Ohio

Live Betfred Super League: Hull Kingston Rovers v Warrington Wolves
Sky Sports Main Event, Sky Sports Action, 7.30pm-10.15
(Kick-off **8.00**). All the action from the match at Sewell Group Craven Park Stadium

Live MLB: Chicago Cubs v Chicago White Sox
TNT Sports 1, 1am-4.00
(Start-time **1.05**). Coverage of the inter-league match at Wrigley Field, which serves as the second of a three-game series

Talking Pictures

7.15am FILM: Now Barabbas Was a Robber (PG, 1949) (b/w) **9.00 FILM: The Love Match (U, 1955)** (b/w) **10.45 FILM: The Strange Love of Martha Ivers (U, 1946)** (b/w) **1.00pm** The Adventures of William Tell (b/w) **1.35 FILM: Green for Danger (PG, 1946)** (b/w) **3.25** What's on TPTV with Noel **3.35** The Bespoke Overcoat **4.20 FILM: The Gentle Sex (U, 1943)** (b/w) **6.10** Look at Life **6.25** Whiplash (b/w) **6.55** The Man from UNCLE **7.55** Buccaneer **9.00 FILM: A Dandy in Aspic (PG, 1968)** Spy thriller **11.10** Fortean TV **11.45** Legend of the Witches **1.25am FILM: At War with the Army (U, 1950)** (b/w) **3.15** Tales of Frankenstein (b/w) **3.50** Look at Life **4.00-5.00** Target: The Corruptors

Film4

11.00am The Kid Who Would Be King (PG, 2019) Fantasy adventure starring Louis Ashbourne Serkis (AD) **1.20pm The Woodlanders (U, 1997)** Thomas Hardy drama starring Emily Woof **3.15 Shenandoah (PG, 1965)** American Civil War western starring James Stewart **5.20 The Lost World (U, 1960)** Fantasy adventure with Claude Rains (AD) **7.15 Horizon Line (15, 2020)** Thriller starring Allison Williams **9.00 65 (12, 2023)** When an astronaut crashes on a mysterious planet, he fights for survival amidst the deadly wildlife. Sci-fi adventure starring Adam Driver (AD) **10.50 The Woman King (15, 2022)** Historical drama starring Viola Davis and Thuso Mbedu (AD) **1.30am-3.35 Ravenous (18, 1999)** Horror starring Guy Pearce, Robert Carlyle and David Arquette

BBC3

7.00pm The Catch Up **7.05** Deadly 60. Steve Backshall visits the marshlands of Argentina **7.30** Deadly 60. Steve Backshall looks for giant river otters in Peru **8.00** Top Gear. Richard Hammond explores the world of Nascar **9.00 FILM: Mission: Impossible 2 (15, 2000)** A secret agent battles a former spy-turned-criminal mastermind intent on stealing a deadly man-made virus. John Woo's action thriller sequel starring Tom Cruise and Dougray Scott (AD) **11.00 FILM: Mission: Impossible III (12, 2006)** A former secret agent ends up in a struggle to save his fiancee from an arms dealer. Action thriller starring Tom Cruise (AD) **12.55am** Fifa World Cup 2026 **1.30** Man Like Mobeen (AD) **2.45am-3.45** Vigil (AD, SL)

ITV2

6.00am Backyard Builds (SL) **6.30** Dress to Impress (AD, SL) **7.30** The Real Housewives of Potomac **8.20** The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills **9.15** Only Way Is Essex **10.15** Dawson's Creek **11.10** Charmed **12.10pm** Deal or No Deal (AD) **1.10** Supermarket Sweep **2.10** The Floor (AD) **3.10** Only Way Is Essex **4.10** Real Housewives of Potomac **5.00** Real Housewives of Beverly Hills **6.00** Celebrity Catchphrase (AD) **7.00** The Floor (AD) **8.00** The 1% Club (AD) **9.00** Olivia Attwood: The Price of Perfection. Olivia looks into the booming trend of facelifts for the under fifties (3/6) **10.00** Family Guy (AD) **11.35** American Dad! (AD) **12.35am** Bob's Burgers (AD) **1.30-1.55** Plebs (AD, SL)

ITV3

6.00am George and Mildred **7.05** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **8.05** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **9.10** Agatha Christie's Poirot (AD) **11.30** Heartbeat (AD) **1.35pm** Midsomer Murders (AD) **3.35** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **4.40** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **5.50** Heartbeat (AD) **8.00** Vera. The detective investigates a suspicious death on a remote island (1/4) (AD) **10.00** Grantchester. Leonard's drinking lands him in a prison cell overnight (5/8) (AD) **11.00** Grantchester. Alphy and Geordie investigate when a member of a band is murdered (6/8) (AD) **11.50** Trial & Retribution. Part one of two. A convicted murderer sets out to prove his innocence (5/10) **12.55am** Trial & Retribution **1.55am-2.20** George and Mildred

ITV4

6.00am Magnum, PI (AD) **8.05** Robin of Sherwood **9.10** Boon **10.15** The Professionals (AD) **11.25** Robin of Sherwood **12.25pm** Magnum, PI (AD) **2.35** The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes (AD) **3.45** Boon **4.50** The Professionals (AD) **5.55** Minder (AD) **7.00** The Motorbike Show. Henry Cole travels to the Isle of Man to interview Enduro star David Knight **8.00** The Grand Fishing Adventure. Ali and Bobby head off on the final leg of their tour (AD) **9.00** Ice Road Truckers. A wagon coming in the opposite direction pushes Lisa into a ditch **10.00** All Elite Wrestling: Collision. Hard-hitting action **12.00** Dark Side of the Ring **12.55am** Benidorm. Double bill (AD) **1.50am-2.45** BattleBots

U&Drama

6.00am Teleshopping **7.20** The Bill **8.15** Doctors **9.25** Classic Holby City **10.45** Casualty (AD) **11.45** The Bill **12.50pm** Classic EastEnders **2.00** Classic Neighbours **3.00** Whitstable Pearl (AD) **4.05** Lovejoy **5.20** As Time Goes By **6.00** Last of the Summer Wine **7.20** Last of the Summer Wine **8.00** 'Allo 'Allo! **8.30** 'Allo 'Allo! **9.00** 'Allo 'Allo! **9.35** New Tricks. New evidence sheds light on the death of a criminal (7/10) (AD) **10.35** Luther. The detective's date is interrupted by news of another murder (2/4) (AD) **11.55** Lovejoy (2/12) **1.05am** Sister Boniface Mysteries (AD) **2.15** Hotel Portofino (SL) **3.10-4.00am** 2point4 Children

Variations

BBC1 N Ireland
10.40pm House of the Year (r) 11.10 FILM: The Untouchables (1987) 1.05am The Hit List (r) 1.50am-6.00 BBC News

BBC1 Scotland
7.00pm-7.30 River City (r) 12.35am Scotcast (r) 1.05 The Hit List (r) 1.55am-6.00 BBC News

BBC2 Wales
7.00pm-7.30 SOS: Extreme Rescues. Documentary (r)

STV
11.05pm Cold Case Forensics: In the Blood (r) 12.00-3.00 Shop on TV 3.50am-6.00 Night Vision

BBC Scotland
7.00pm Reporting Scotland 7.30 The Great Food Guys (r) 8.00 This Farming Life (r) 9.00 Murder Trial: Death of a Dog Walker 10.00 David Wilson's Crime Files (r) 11.00 Scotcast 11.30pm-12.00 Icons of Football (r)

S4C
6.00am Cyw 12.00 News 12.05pm Codi Pac (r) 12.30 Heno (r) 1.00 Bwrdd i Dri (r) 1.30 Arfordir Cymru: Sir Benfro (r) 2.00 News 2.05 Prynhawn Da 3.05 Gwesty Aduniad (r) 4.00 Awr Fawr: Blociau Lliw (r) 4.05 Twm Twrch (r) 4.15 Fferm Fach (r) 4.30 Blero yn Mynd i Ocido (r) 4.45 Byd Tad-Cu (r) 5.00 Stwnsh: Dreigiau — Marchogion Berc (r) 5.25 Y Smyrffs (r) 5.40 Un Cwestiwn (r) 6.00 Y Ci Perffaith (r) 6.30 Codi Hwyl (r) 7.00 Heno 7.30 News 8.00 Pobol y Cwm 8.25 Nol o'r Dibyn gyda Iolo Williams (r) 9.00 Siwrna Scandi Chris (r) 10.00 Iaith ar Daith (r) 11.00-12.05am Y Cosmos (r)

PBS America

8.00am World of Stonehenge **9.20** The Stuarts **10.35** Franco: The Last Inquisitor **11.50** The Truth About Franco: Spain's Forgotten Dictatorship **1.00pm** Weathered: Earth's Extremes **1.35** World of Stonehenge **2.45** The Stuarts **3.55** Franco: The Last Inquisitor **5.05** The Truth About Franco: Spain's Forgotten Dictatorship **6.15** World of Stonehenge. The origins of Britain and its people **7.20** The Stuarts. The impact of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms **8.30** Franco: The Last Inquisitor. Part two of two. Spanish general Francisco Franco Bahamonde **9.45** The Truth About Franco: Spain's Forgotten Dictatorship **10.55** The Stuarts **12.00** Franco: The Last Inquisitor **1.15am-2.00** Weathered: Earth's Extremes. Documentary

Sky Atlantic

6.00am Fish Town (r) **8.00** Billions (r) (AD) **10.15** House of the Dragon (r) (AD) **12.35pm** Homicide: Life on the Street (r) **2.30** Billions (r) (AD) **4.40** The Last of Us (r) (AD) **6.45** House of the Dragon (r) (AD) **7.45** House of the Dragon. Rhaenyra questions Daemon's loyalty (r) (AD) **9.00** Little Bird. Canadian drama starring Darla Contois (1/6) (r) **10.00** Little Bird. Esther discovers her adoption papers (2/6) (r) **11.00** House of the Dragon. As Rhaenyra struggles to come to terms with her son's murder, Alicent grows concerned by Aegon's Small Council (r) (AD) **12.05am** House of the Dragon. Rhaenyra questions Daemon's loyalty (r) (AD) **1.20** Billions (r) (AD) **3.40** The Guest Wing (r) (AD) **4.35** Sort Of (r) (AD) **5.05am-6.00** The Guest Wing (r) (AD)

Sky Docs

6.00am The 2010s (r) **7.00** Discovering: Michael Keaton (r) (AD) **8.00** The Directors (r) **9.00** Stax: Soulsville USA (r) (AD) **10.00** The Story of Late Night (r) **10.55** Celtics City (r) (AD) **12.00 FILM: Dettori (12, 2021)** The story of Frankie Dettori (AD) **2.10pm** QPR: The Four Year Plan (r) (AD) **4.00** The Directors (r) **5.00** Discovering: Michael Keaton (r) (AD) **6.00** I Am Patrick Swayze (r) (AD) **7.50** My Icon: Casey Stoney (r) (AD) **8.00** Mind Over Murder. New DNA evidence leads to calls for exonerations for the Beatrice Six (r) **9.00** Mind Over Murder (r) **10.05** Mind Over Murder (r) **11.10** Schmeichel (r) (AD) **1.00am** Italia 90: Four Weeks That Changed the World (r) (AD) **4.00** The Directors (r) **5.00am-6.00** Discovering: Michael Keaton (r) (AD)

U&Yesterday

6.10am Abandoned Engineering (AD) **8.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics (AD) **10.00** Secret Nazi Bases **11.00** The World at War **12.00** Antiques Roadshow **2.00pm** Bangers & Cash (AD) **4.00** Secret Nazi Bases **5.00** The World at War. How France fell to the Nazis **6.00** Antiques Roadshow **7.00** The Blue Planet. Taking a journey to the deepest parts of the world's oceans (AD) **8.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics. Derek points the team towards one of his favourite motors — a 1983 Daimler Double Six (AD) **9.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **10.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **11.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **12.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics (AD) **1.00am** Find It, Fix It, Flog It **2.00** Abandoned Engineering (AD) **3.00am-6.10** Teleshopping

MindGames

Tetonor Easy No 701

15	294	36	98
204	29	180	55
54	100	21	138
56	49	208	20

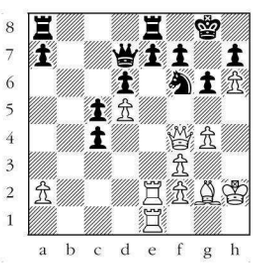
	4	6	6	6	7	9	10	10	12	14				52

When complete, the strip below the grid can be split into eight pairs of numbers. Adding the numbers in a pair gives one of the 16 numbers in the grid. Multiplying them gives a different number in the grid. For example, a 4 and 6 in the strip could be paired to make 10 (4+6) and 24 (4x6) in the grid. Enter each sum below the corresponding number in the grid. The blanks in the strip must be deduced, bearing in mind the numbers are listed in ascending order.

The next Tetonor puzzle will appear on Thursday

For more puzzles, including Mini Sudoku, extra Codeword, Train Tracks and Futoshiki go to page 10

Winning Move



White to play.
This position is from Santiago Vilca-Kreken, Titled Tuesday, chess.com 2026.

In this game White had recently moved the king from g1 to the h2-square. This is a decent move on general principles but it also had a very specific tactical point. His opponent, however, possibly not yet fully awake, has missed this and White now crashed through in fine style. Can you spot the key move?

Codeword No 5922

21	20	26	16	6	22	■	4	■	24	26	13	8
20	■	18	■	2	■	1	15	16	15	■	■	13
15	16	9	26	13	16	■	9	■	17	18	17	18
7	■	■	■	19	■	25	■	12	■	1	■	12
7	10	26	5	15	9	15	1	26	■	17	15	26
■	■	1	■	■	■	17	■	15	■	22	■	13
6	18	17	9	2	13	■	14	16	2	2	9	23
22	■	13	■	16	■	17	■	■	■	13	■	■
18	10	26	■	6	22	18	13	18	8	18	16	6 C
16	■	14	■	26	■	9	■	3	■	■	■	2 O
6	20	14	14	■	19	■	10	2	19	11	18	1 M
26	■	■	2	16	23	5	■	17	■	2	■	15
13	2	14	23	■	1	■	14	9	18	9	15	6

© PUZZLER MEDIA

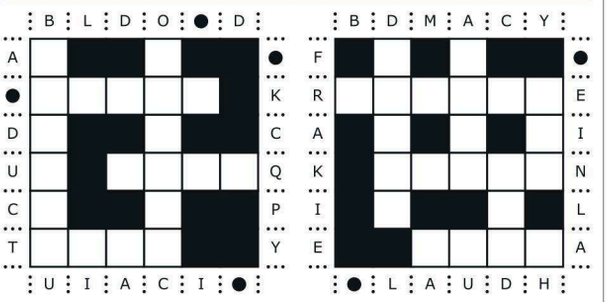
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1 M	2 O	3	4	5	6 C	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Every letter in this crossword-style grid is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Yesterday's solution, right*

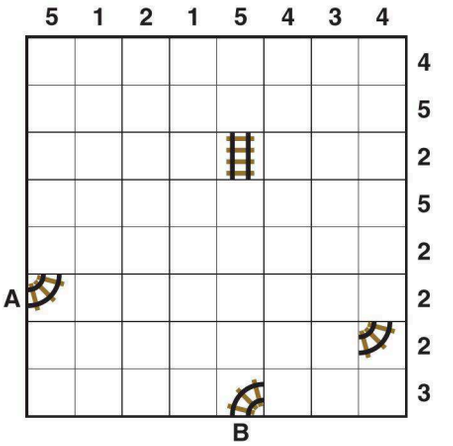
Cluelines **Stuck on Codeword?** To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. If you have an old newspaper and need clues from the past 7 days, call 0905 624 0024. Calls to 0905 cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

Lexica Easy No 9061 Hard No 9062



Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

Train Tracks No 2947



Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

Quintagram® No 2649

Solve all five **cryptic** clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Nuisance of gym class beside street (4)

_ _ _ _

2 In audition, mock movement lacking clarity (5)

_ _ _ _ _

3 Consume loads in café, as thirsty (5)

_ _ _ _ _

4 Hatred, in my opinion, blurred sanity checks (9)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Amazing Rudolf with new flourishes (9)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

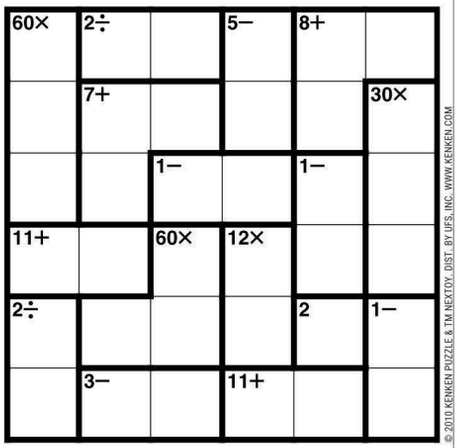
A	A	A	D	E	E	E	F
F	F	I	I	I	L	M	N
N	N	O	O	P	R	S	S
S	T	T	T	T	U	W	Y

Challenge your mind with these fiendish word and number puzzles

timesbookshop.co.uk

Try Wordhunt and Picle, our new online Quick Play puzzles at thetimes.com/puzzles and on the Live app

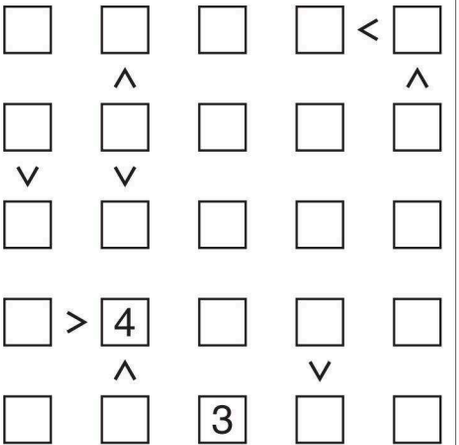
KenKen Medium No 6914



© 2010 KENKEN PUZZLE & TM NEXTOY. DIST. BY UFS, INC. WWW.KENKEN.COM

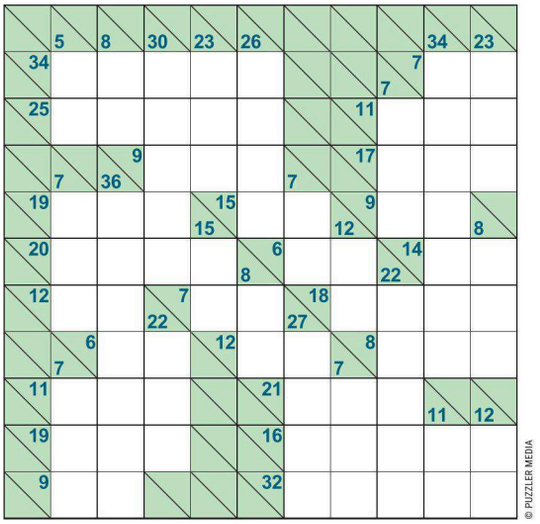
All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

Futoshiki No 5462



Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Kakuro No 4421



© PUZZLER MEDIA

Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

MindGames

times2 Crossword No 10,238

Across
1 Digital information structure (8)
7 Yellowish-brown pigment (5)
8 Pupa (9)
9 Rest on one's posterior (3)
10 Wet weather (4)
11 Significance (6)
13 Large equatorial island (6)
14 Hand tool; cocktail (6)
17 Failed to remember (6)
18 --- *The Herald Angels Sing*, Christmas carol (4)
20 Prime number (3)
22 Absorbed by an activity (9)
23 Raw vegetables dish (5)
24 Device control options (8)

Down
1 Home design features (5)
2 Jack Russell, eg (7)
3 Take in the sun (4)
4 Serious, sober (6)
5 Spook, spirit (5)
6 Navigational instrument (7)
7 Movement of a solvent through a membrane (7)
12 Facially hirsute (7)
13 Christen (7)
15 Clandestine love affair (7)
16 Scout's neckerchief ring (6)
17 Stupidity (5)
19 Respect, acclaim (5)
21 Overwhelming defeat (4)

Solution to Crossword 10,237

Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Bridge Andrew Robson

Ian Hamilton from Belfast showed me this interesting defensive problem from the Northern Ireland Premier League. As West, you lead the ace of hearts v 5♣, partner (who has pre-empted 3♥) following with the queen. Declarer ruffs, crosses to the ace of diamonds (East playing low to indicate an odd number, presumably three) and leads the nine of clubs. And you?

At the table, West played second-hand low and declarer ran the nine of clubs. West won declarer's second club with the ace and switched to a spade to East's ace, but that was the second and last defensive trick — 5♣ made.

Have you spotted the winning defence? Rise with the ace of clubs and lead your second diamond. Declarer wins in dummy but needs to cross back to hand to finesse the jack of clubs. However, when he leads a spade, East flies in with the ace and leads a third diamond. You overruff declarer with your queen and that's one down.

This is a defence you really should get right. Any defence needs East to have the ace of spades or there's no third defensive trick — and his ownership of this card is implied by his trick-one queen of hearts (suit preference signal). Leading your second diamond will lock declarer in dummy and he will have to lead a spade. Now, all you need is for partner to rise with the ace; a third diamond at this point should not be beyond the wit of man.

What of declarer's play? Instead of crossing to hand with the ace of diamonds at trick two, he should have led a spade — there's no winning defence now.

Admittedly, leading a spade at trick two would be the wrong thing to do if East held only two spades and ♣Qx; in that case, the defence could play ace and a second spade, enabling West to win the first club with the ace and lead a third spade, promoting East's queen of clubs. But if East holds ♣Qx, declarer is getting clubs wrong and going down anyway.

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk

Dealer: East, Vulnerability: East-West

Teams

North: ♠102 ♥- ♦KQJ1062 ♣KJ532

West: ♠98654 ♥AK3 ♦98 ♣AQ4

East: ♠AJ ♥QJ107642 ♦743 ♣8

South: ♠KQ73 ♥985 ♦A5 ♣10976

S	W	N	E
			3♥ (1)
Pass	4♥	4NT(2)	Pass
5♣	End		

(1) Weak with seven decent hearts.
(2) Unusual, showing (at least) five-five in the minors. Note, if the opponents had bid (3♠)-P-(4♠), the 4NT bid would have shown any two of the other three suits. The other (reasonable) alternative for North would be simply to bid 5♦. The trouble with 4NT is that partner will bid the cheaper 5♣ with equal length — and you'll play in the wrong minor.

Contract: 5♣, Opening Lead: ♥A

Brain Trainer

EASY 48	÷ 4	HALVE IT	x 5	+ 1/3 OF IT	x 3	DOUBLE IT	x 2	- 24	÷ 8	ANSWER
MEDIUM 36	x 9	+ 5/12 OF IT	DOUBLE IT	- 189	÷ 9	+ 5	TRIPLE IT	+ 122	+ 3/10 OF IT	ANSWER
HARDER 14	CUBE IT	+ 42	+ 1/7 OF IT	+ 191	÷ 15	−3/5 OF IT	DOUBLE IT	+ 1/10 OF IT	x 4	ANSWER

Polygon

From these letters, make words of **three** or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives. **How you rate** 17 words, average; 23, good; 26, very good; 30, excellent

Yesterday's answers
agio, ago, aim, air, amigo, amir, arm, gam, gar, gora, gram, imago, mag, mar, moa, oar, ogam, **origami**, rag, rai, ram, ria, roam

Cell Blocks No 5805

© PUZZLER MEDIA

Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

Set Square No 4424

© PUZZLER MEDIA

Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

Please note, BODMAS does not apply

Killer Moderate No 10,882

Killer Tough No 10,883

As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

Cluelines Stuck on Sudoku, Killer or KenKen? Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Solutions

Quick Cryptic 3382

Codeword 5921

Kakuro 4420

Sudoku 17,031

1	2	8	6	7	5	3	4	9
6	9	4	1	8	3	2	5	7
5	3	7	9	4	2	1	8	6
9	8	6	5	3	7	4	1	2
7	1	3	4	2	6	5	9	8
4	5	2	8	9	1	6	7	3
8	6	9	2	5	4	7	3	1
2	7	5	3	1	9	8	6	4
3	4	1	7	6	8	9	2	5

GK Crossword 351

Train Tracks 2946

Sudoku 17,032

7	5	6	2	4	1	9	3	8
3	4	1	9	8	6	7	2	5
2	9	8	3	5	7	1	6	4
8	3	5	1	7	2	4	9	6
4	1	9	6	3	8	5	7	2
6	2	7	5	9	4	8	1	3
9	6	2	8	1	5	3	4	7
1	8	4	7	2	3	6	5	9
5	7	3	4	6	9	2	8	1

Cell Blocks 5804

Set Square 4423

Lexica 9059

Sudoku 17,033

5	7	4	8	6	2	1	3	9
6	1	9	3	7	4	5	8	2
2	3	8	9	5	1	7	4	6
7	6	3	1	4	5	9	2	8
1	8	5	6	2	9	4	7	3
9	4	2	7	8	3	6	1	5
8	5	1	4	3	6	2	9	7
4	2	7	5	9	8	3	6	1
3	9	6	2	1	7	8	5	4

Futoshiki 5461

KenKen 6913

Lexica 9060

Killer 10,880

4	3	7	5	2	8	1	6	9
6	5	8	1	9	3	7	4	2
2	1	9	7	4	6	5	8	3
7	9	6	2	8	5	4	3	1
1	2	4	9	3	7	8	5	6
3	8	5	4	6	1	2	9	7
8	4	1	6	7	9	3	2	5
9	7	3	8	5	2	6	1	4
5	6	2	3	1	4	9	7	8

Killer 10,881

3	1	8	7	4	2	6	9	5
6	4	5	9	8	3	7	1	2
7	9	2	1	5	6	8	4	3
9	7	4	8	2	5	1	3	6
5	6	1	4	3	7	2	8	9
2	8	3	6	9	1	4	5	7
4	2	6	3	1	9	5	7	8
8	3	7	5	6	4	9	2	1
1	5	9	2	7	8	3	6	4

Today's solutions

Concise Quintagram
1 Hungry
2 Angler
3 Gotham
4 Picture
5 Frankly

Cryptic Quintagram
1 Pest
2 Faint
3 Feast
4 Animosity
5 Wonderful

Sakuro 4823

Brain Trainer
Easy 57
Medium 494
Harder 792

Word watch
Avgolemono (a) A Greek soup made with eggs (*Collins*)
Prolusion (a) A preliminary performance (*Chambers*)
Cremor (b) Surface matter on liquid (*Collins*)

Chess — Winning Move
1 Rxe7! exploits the dark squares weaknesses in Black's kingside. After 1 ... Rxe7 (there is nothing better) 2 Qxf6 threatens mate on g7 and meets 2 ... Kf8 with 3 Qh8 mate

Quiz
1 Petrol station **2** Rudyard Kipling **3** Lagos **4** US dollar **5** Thatcher **6** Stevie Smith **7** Herodotus **8** Isle of Skye **9** Dunelm, formerly known as Dunelm Mill **10** *Castaway 2000* **11** Rudolf Virchow. It means "every cell stems from another cell" **12** Rusted Root **13** Yoto **14** Undercroft Skate Space. It is beneath the Queen Elizabeth Hall building **15** Cheesecake

THE TIMES

18.08.26

MindGames

For extra puzzles See page 10

Word watch
David Parfitt

Avgolemono
a A Greek soup made with eggs
b A clay figure magically brought to life
c A wide-sleeved robe tied with a sash

Prolusion
a A preliminary performance
b The majority of ordinary people
c Self-deception

Cremor
a Pomp, pageantry
b Surface matter on liquid
c A sorcerer's tome of spells

Answers on page 15

Sudoku

Mild No 17,034

		4		6	7	2		
	1		4		8		5	
		8						
	3					1	4	8
	5	7				6	3	
	6			5	2		1	4
		5		1	9	3		6
				8		5	7	

Difficult No 17,035

								6
				3		2	9	1
		4	1					
		8					4	5
	2				7		1	3
				5	3		2	
	5							2
	1		5	6	8			
4	3		2	7		1		

Super fiendish No 17,036

					1			
7		3	9					
		4	2		5		6	8
	6						1	
						4	2	5
	7						8	
		5	1		2		3	7
9		7	5					
					8			

© PUZZLER MEDIA

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

The Times Daily Quiz
Olav Bjortomt

1 What is the British term for what an American would call gas station?

2 Who wrote the novels *Captains Courageous* (1897), *Kim* (1901) and the fantasy book *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906)?

3 Which city is seen as the commercial capital of Nigeria and the economic hub of West Africa?

4 What is the most traded currency in the world?

5 What is the job of a person who makes and maintains straw roofs for traditional English country cottages?

6 Which English poet is the subject of Hugh Whitemore's 1977 play *Stevie*?

ALAMY

7 Which ancient Greek historian was called "the father of lies" by Plutarch?

8 The Old Man of Storr is a 55m-high pinnacle of basalt rock on which Scottish island?

9 Which home furnishings retailer was founded by Bill and Jean Adderley in 1979 as a Leicester market stall?

10 In which BBC reality series were 36 volunteers left on the remote Scottish island of Taransay?

11 In 1855, which German pathologist published the now famous aphorism: *omnis cellula e cellula*?

12 Led by Michael Glabicki, which American worldbeat rock band released the 1994 single *Send Me on my Way*?

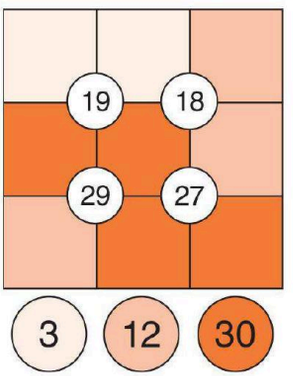
13 Ben Drury and Filip Denker conceived which screen-free music player for children in 2015?

14 Which Southbank Centre skateboarding space is recognised as the world's oldest continually used skate spot?

15 The crustless Basque style of which dessert is pictured?

Answers on page 15

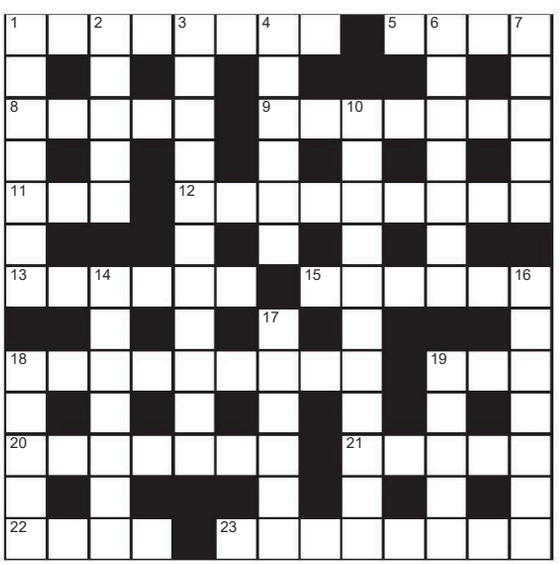
Sakuro
No 4823



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

For interactive puzzles visit thetimes.com

The Times Quick Cryptic
No 3383 by Dove



Across
1 Pleasure-seeker's gesture rejected during robbery (8)
5 Eager, back head of government (4)
8 Doctor and I have energy (5)
9 Call back with thanks about magazine's latest issue (7)
11 Fuel essential to boiler (3)
12 Hateful mole not usually keeping promises (9)
13 Talk's opening line about united company (6)
15 Most of danger faced by revolutionary plot remains (6)
18 Blasphemy? Wise to suppress constant anger (9)
19 Returned answer, about time (3)
20 Flexible, finally breaking ice, relaxed (7)
21 Praise former partner joining group in retirement (5)
22 Cover over pool (4)
23 Warm argument consuming hour in airport (8)

Down
1 Endlessly nasty time in retreat (7)
2 Training day runs badly (5)
3 Want top line altered in embroidery (11)
4 Alternate view observed (6)
6 Fascination left in good affair (7)
7 Expression of surprise over wings of some birds (5)
10 Accomplishment, working in the cave around empty mine (11)
14 Old king wanting one area of fruit trees (7)
16 Bird's down (7)
17 Save reminder, following resolution (6)
18 Wonderful son in good health (5)
19 Penetrate part of alien territory (5)

Yesterday's solution on page 15

TRAILFINDERS
THE TRAVEL EXPERTS

WHEREVER AND WHENEVER, TRUST TRAILFINDERS TO TAKE CARE OF YOU...

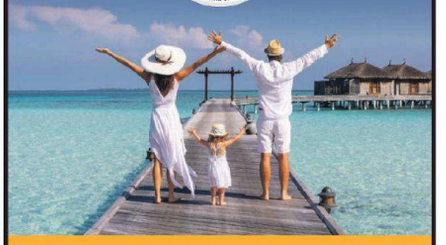
Trustpilot
No.1 TOUR OPERATOR

Local to You
47 high street Travel Centres staffed with expert Consultants across the UK & Ireland

Independent Trusted Travel Advice
On hand 365/24/7, we offer wholly impartial advice alongside an extensive range of hand-picked quality product

Unrivalled Care & Protection
Unique ATOL approved Trust Account

Which? Awards



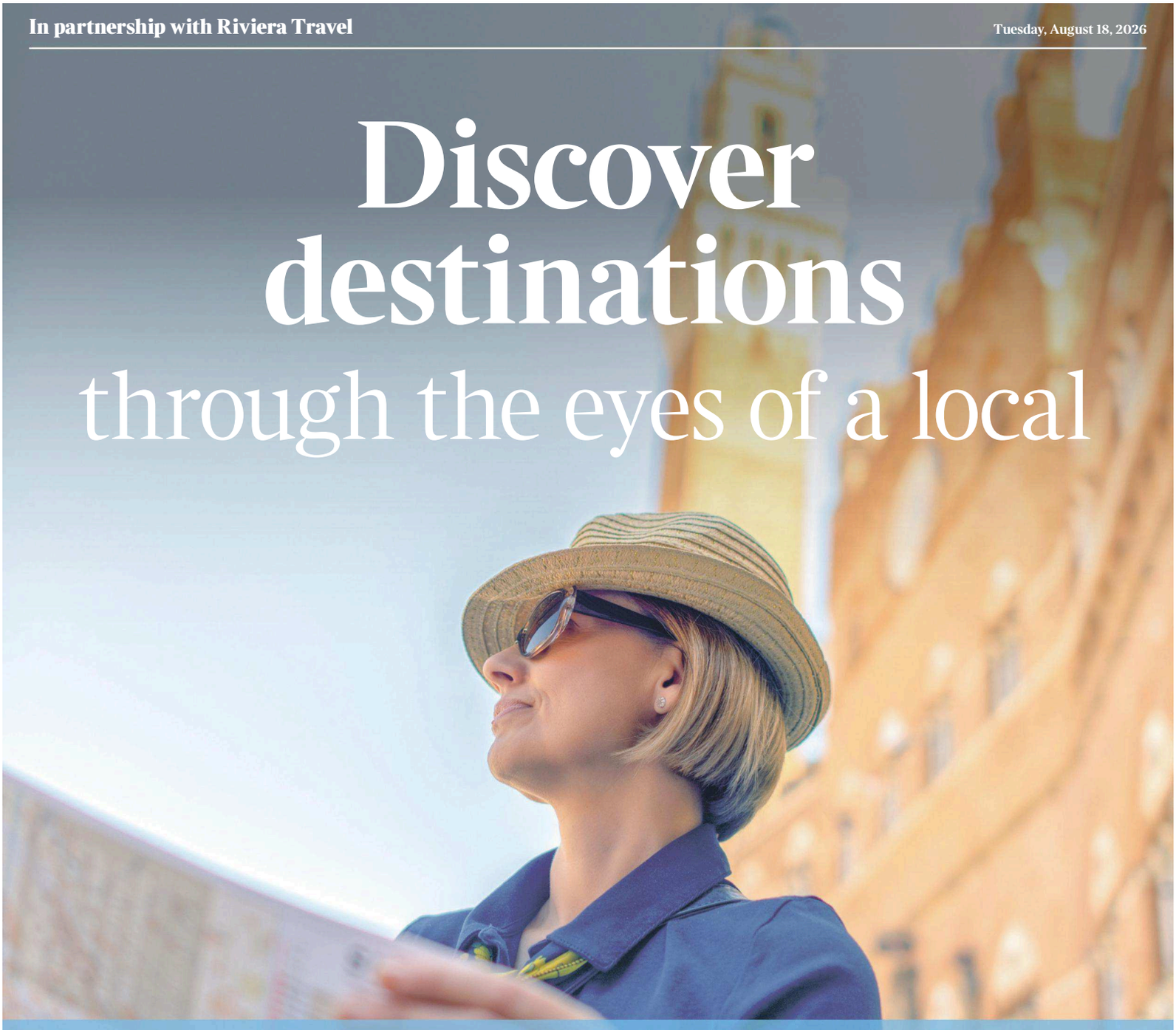
ALL YOUR TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS TAKEN CARE OF IN ONE PLACE

Call TRAILFINDERS on 020 7368 1364, or visit your local Trailfinders Travel Centre

ATOL LICENCE: 1458
caa.co.uk

Discover destinations

through the eyes of a local



SAVE £200PP on select Sept to Nov 2026 European tour departures†

With Riviera Travel, you're covered

Which? Recommended Provider for 14 years

Unbeatable value, protected by our Quality Promise

feefo ★★★★★

DECEMBER 2025 Which? Recommended Provider ESCORTED TOURS

RIVIERA TRAVEL

ABTA No. V4744

Call now to book

0808 258 8811 thetimes.com/rtravel

TIMES Travel Partner

Discover your new favourite destination

At Riviera Travel, we do the hard work to deliver adventures effortlessly. Our magnificent tour collection has something for everyone, and now †save £200PP on select September to November 2026 European tour departures, there's no reason why you shouldn't treat yourself to that much deserved holiday.

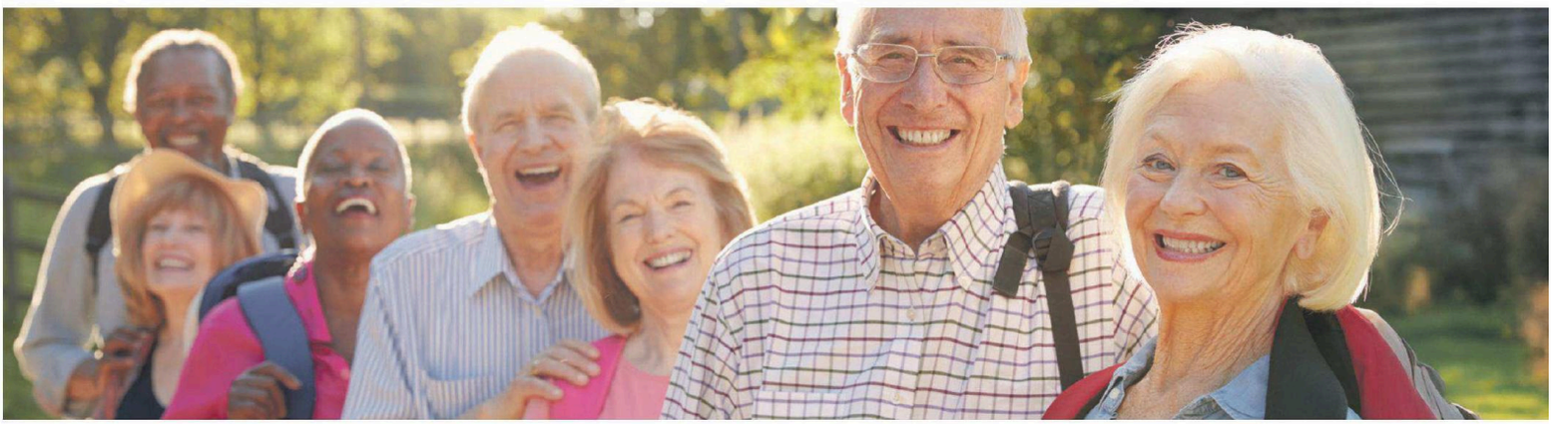
If you've joined one of our holidays before, you know just how great they are and how much is included in the price. If you've yet to join us, you're in for a treat.

Enhance your holiday with these incredible offers

Travel from your local airport at no extra cost

Choose from the widest selection of dates and regional departures options and start your holiday the way you want to, at no extra cost.

Request a brochure



Hidden Italy: Padua, Vicenza & Mantua

TOUR

SIX DAYS
FROM
£929
PER PERSON

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS FROM A SELECTION OF REGIONAL AIRPORTS PLUS TRANSFERS

Uncover the unseen gems of the breathtaking Veneto and beyond, from beautiful architecture, and cities steeped in history to some of Italy's best wines. This holiday is ideal for travellers who've already visited Italy's most famous cities – Rome, Venice and Florence – and want to keep exploring this understandably popular country or those looking for a quieter slice of Italian life.

Departures October 2026 and April to October 2027

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-pv**

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights with hotel transfers
- Five nights in four-star accommodation, with daily breakfast
- Services of an experienced tour manager

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

- Four visits, including Padua, Palazzo Ducale, Scrovegni Chapel and a local artisan museum
- Two guided tours, including Mantua and Vicenza
- A tour and tasting at a winery at Villa Sandi

Classical Spain

Seville, Córdoba and Granada

TOUR

SEVEN DAYS
FROM
£839
PER PERSON

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS FROM A SELECTION OF REGIONAL AIRPORTS PLUS TRANSFERS

Andalucía is one of the most beautiful corners of Europe, where the excesses of modern life do not seem to have taken root and travellers are welcomed as honoured guests. Immortalised by the writings of Ernest Hemingway and beloved by Orson Welles, it is the Spain of Carmen, Figaro and flamenco. Rich with the legacies of the Moors and Romans, its charm and serenity will captivate you.

Departures November 2026 and February to November 2027

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-cs**

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights with hotel transfers
- Six nights in three-star superior and four-star accommodation with daily breakfast, inclusive of all local taxes
- Services of an experienced tour manager

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

- Two guided tours including Seville and the Mezquita, Córdoba
- Enjoy tapas in Seville
- Four visits including Granada and the outstanding Alhambra Palace, Córdoba and Ronda

RIVIERA TRAVEL

ABTA No. V4744

Call now to book

0808 258 8811 thetimes.com/rtravel

TIMES Travel Partner

Prices are per person, based on two sharing and are correct at time of print. Single rooms are subject to availability at the relevant supplement. Additional entrance costs may apply. All holidays are subject to availability. Images used in conjunction with Riviera Travel. Operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Riviera Tours Ltd, ABTA V4744, ATOL 3430, IATA 9127440, a company wholly independent of News UK. Riviera Travel, New Manor, 328 Wetmore Road, Burton-on-Trent, DE14 1SP. Visit the website for full t&cs. †Save £200pp on selected Riviera Travel European escorted tours departing September 1 to November 30, 2026, valid on new bookings from May 7, 2026, with savings already included and subject to availability. Applies to tour price only (excludes extras), can be combined with other offers, and may be withdrawn or changed at any time.

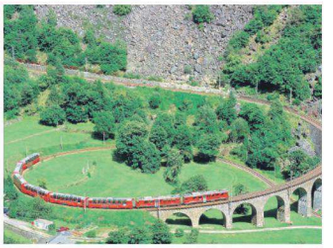
Save £200PP on select Sept to Nov 2026 European tour departures†

Grand Tour of Lake Como, Milan & the Bernina Express

TOUR

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS PLUS TRANSFERS

11 DAYS
FROM
£2,399
PER PERSON



Combining the beautiful Lake Como and Lake Maggiore with chic Milan, this Grand Tour explores some of the highlights of northern Italy and Switzerland, including a jaw-dropping journey on the Bernina Express.

Departures October 2026 and April to October 2027

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-col**

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights with hotel transfers
- Ten nights in three-to four-star accommodation, with daily breakfast and seven dinners
- Services of an experienced tour manager

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

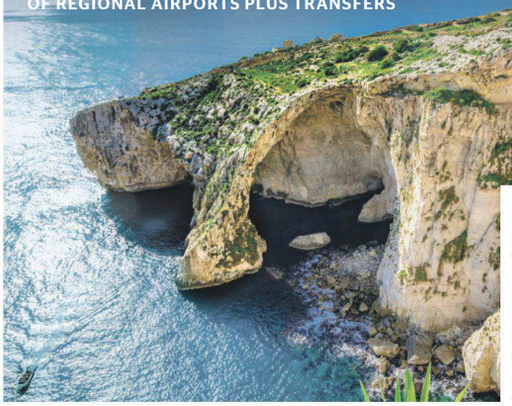
- Five visits including Bellagio, Stresa on Lake Maggiore, St Moritz, Lugano and Monza
- Three guided tours (four in 2027) including Milan, Villa del Balbianello and Isola Bella. Guided tour of Milan Duomo (2027 only)
- An unforgettable journey on the Bernina Express
- Visit La Scala Museum
- Visit Lugano with scenic promenades, designer boutiques and lake views
- Wander through Villa Carlotta's gardens and view its magnificent private art collection
- Marvel at the jaw-dropping vistas from a first-class seat on the Bernina Express

Malta Uncovered

TOUR

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS FROM A SELECTION OF REGIONAL AIRPORTS PLUS TRANSFERS

EIGHT DAYS
FROM
£1,099
PER PERSON



You will be amazed at the Malta, so few people have yet discovered. There are wonderful seascapes and a coastline eroded over the centuries into sheer drops, huge caverns and contorted pillars of rock blending perfectly with the deep blue sea.

Departures September to November 2026 and February to November 2027

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-tl**

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights with hotel transfers
- Seven nights in four-star to four-star superior accommodation, with daily breakfast and dinner
- Services of an experienced tour manager

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

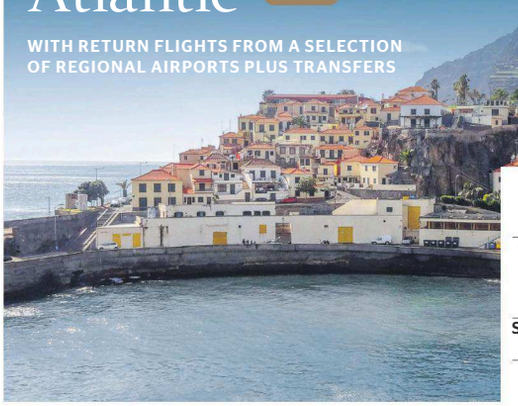
- Three guided tours including Valletta, Gozo and Città Vittoriosa
- Six visits including the Malta Experience, Ggantija, Hagar Qim, Mdina, Rabat and Marsaxlokk
- Enjoy a tasting of Maltese wines at a prestigious local vineyard

Madeira, the Pearl of the Atlantic

TOUR

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS FROM A SELECTION OF REGIONAL AIRPORTS PLUS TRANSFERS

EIGHT DAYS
FROM
£1,709
PER PERSON



The 'Pearl of the Atlantic', Madeira is a subtropical gardener's paradise, blessed with a mild climate all year round, making this 'island of eternal spring' a superb destination.

Departures October and November 2026 and March to November 2027

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-md**

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights with hotel transfers
- Seven nights in four-star accommodation, with daily breakfast and seven dinners**
- Services of an experienced tour manager

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

- Two guided tours including Funchal and Monte Palace Tropical Gardens
- Enjoy a tasting of the delicious and world-famous Madeira wines
- Six visits including the Palheiro Gardens, Câmara de Lobos, Santana, Ribeiro Frio National Park, Cabo Girão, Porto Moniz and the Valley of the Nuns

RIVIERA TRAVEL

ABTA No. V4744

Call now to book

0808 258 8811 thetimes.com/rtravel

TIMES Travel Partner

Prices are per person, based on two sharing and are correct at time of print. Single rooms are subject to availability at the relevant supplement. Additional entrance costs may apply. All holidays are subject to availability. Images used in conjunction with Riviera Travel. Operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Riviera Tours Ltd, ABTA V4744, ATOL 3430, IATA 9127440, a company wholly independent of News UK. Riviera Travel, New Manor, 328 Wetmore Road, Burton-on-Trent, DE14 1SP. Visit the website for full t&cs. **If staying at the Pestana Grand, 7 dinners are included. If staying at the Melia Mare, 4 dinners are included. †Save £200pp on selected Riviera Travel European escorted tours departing September 1 to November 30, 2026, valid on new bookings from May 7, 2026, with savings already included and subject to availability. Applies to tour price only (excludes extras), can be combined with other offers, and may be withdrawn or changed at any time.

Save £200PP on select Sept to Nov 2026 European tour departures†

Grand Tour of Portugal: Lisbon, Porto & Cascais

TOUR

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS PLUS TRANSFERS

TEN DAYS
FROM
£2,699
PER PERSON

Spend longer in one of Europe's oldest countries on a Grand Tour of Portugal. Discover its vibrant cities and majestic palaces, taste Portuguese port and wine and explore the Unesco-protected Sintra and Guimarães, and Braga's Sanctuary of Bom Jesus do Monte.

Departures March to November 2027

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-pop7**

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports plus hotel transfers
- Nine nights in four-star accommodation, with daily breakfast and two dinners
- Services of an experienced tour manager

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

- Guided tours of Lisbon and Porto
- Savour the taste of port at Taylor's Port Wine Lodge
- Visits to the fortified town of Óbidos, Coimbra University and Sintra's Royal Palace
- Experience the unique musical sounds of traditional Fado and dine on typical Portuguese dishes at an atmospheric local restaurant
- Enjoy an evening of traditional Fado, where expressive, moving performances unfold as dinner is served

Helsinki, Tallinn & Riga

TOUR

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS FROM A SELECTION OF REGIONAL AIRPORTS PLUS TRANSFERS

EIGHT DAYS
FROM
£1,169
PER PERSON

Helsinki, Tallinn and Riga offer a rich and intertwining history which adds up to make a fascinating journey. The area boasts a number of gems that Unesco has designated as World Heritage sites including the incomparable Suomenlinna Sea Fortress. Take the opportunity to wander through a maze of old-town streets, marvel at a melting pot of architecture and immerse yourself in the atmosphere of this wonderful corner of Europe.

Departures October 2026 and April to October 2026

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-ht**

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights with hotel transfers and ferry crossing
- Seven nights in four-star accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, with daily breakfast and three dinners
- Services of an experienced tour manager

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

- Five guided tours including Helsinki, Suomenlinna Fortress, Kadriorg Palace and gardens, Tallinn and Riga
- Enjoy a comfortable ferry crossing from Finland to Estonia

Timeless Provence

TOUR

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS OR EUROSTAR^ PLUS TRANSFERS

EIGHT DAYS
FROM
£1,679
PER PERSON

Discover the beautiful towns of Aix-en-Provence, Arles and Avignon; experience the enchanting scenery of the Luberon, made famous in Peter Mayle's book, A Year in Provence; and marvel at the stunning wilderness of the Camargue. Immortalised by Cézanne and Van Gogh, it possesses a rich history. See the legacies of past inhabitants and visitors – the Greeks, the Phoenicians, the Saracens and the Romans.

Departures September and October 2026 and May to October 2027

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-pr**

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights with hotel transfers
- Seven nights in four-to four-star superior accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, breakfast and two dinners at local restaurants**
- Services of an experienced tour manager

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

- Two guided tours including Aix-en- Provence and Arles
- Two boat trips with commentary through the Camargue and Cassis
- Seven visits including Avignon, the Luberon Mountains, the Pont du Gard and the Camargue

RIVIERA TRAVEL

ABTA No. V4744

Call now to book

0808 258 8811 thetimes.com/rtravel

TIMES Travel Partner

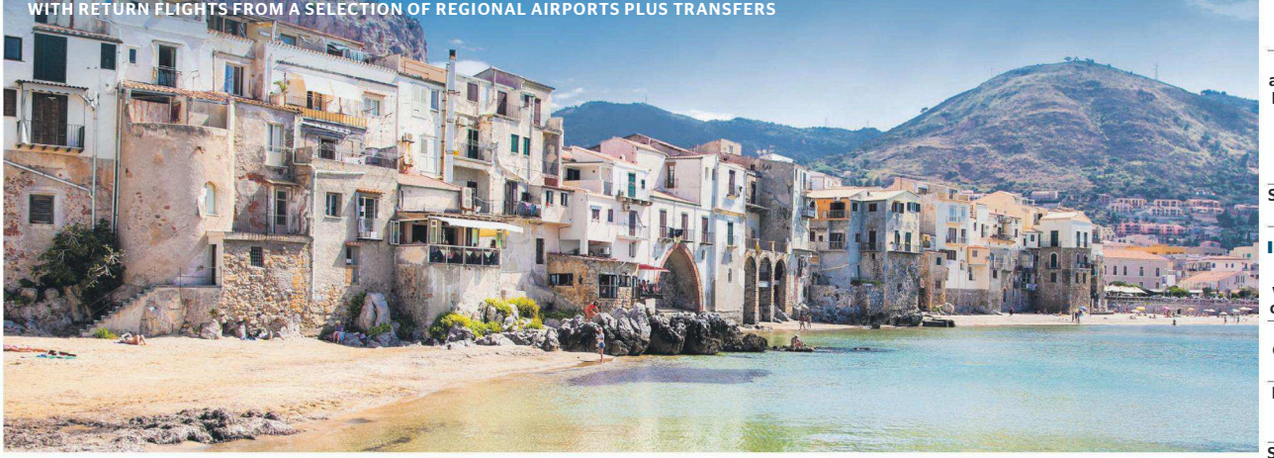
Prices are per person, based on two sharing and are correct at time of print. Single rooms are subject to availability at the relevant supplement. Additional entrance costs may apply. All holidays are subject to availability. Images used in conjunction with Riviera Travel. Operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Riviera Tours Ltd, ABTA V4744, AITOL 3430, IATA 9127440, a company wholly independent of News UK. Riviera Travel, New Manor, 328 Wetmore Road, Burton-on-Trent, DE14 1SP. Visit the website for full t&cs. †Save £200pp on selected Riviera Travel European escorted tours departing September 1 to November 30, 2026, valid on new bookings from May 7, 2026, with savings already included and subject to availability. Applies to tour price only (excludes extras), can be combined with other offers, and may be withdrawn or changed at any time. **Stays at the Mercure Beaumanoir also includes 1 dinner at the hotel.

Save £200PP on select Sept to Nov 2026 European tour departures†

Grand Tour of Sicily – Taormina, Siracusa & Mount Etna

TOUR

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS FROM A SELECTION OF REGIONAL AIRPORTS PLUS TRANSFERS



11 DAYS
FROM
£2,949
PER PERSON

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights plus hotel transfers
- Ten nights in four-star accommodation with daily breakfast and dinner, plus two lunches (2026 only) and daily breakfast, eight dinners and two lunches (from 2027)
- Services of an experienced tour manager

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

- Guided tour of Palermo with a gorgeous medieval centre and Norman palace
- Visit Villa Romana del Casale in Piazza Armerina on a guided tour
- Explore the Greek ruins of the Valley of the Temples and visit Mount Etna
- Sample the wines of Mount Etna and enjoy a rustic lunch at a local winery
- Enjoy a boat trip to explore the caves of Syracuse
- Spend free time in Cefalù, Taormina, and Syracuse
- Guided tour of the Massimo Theatre with a cocktail in the Royal box lounge

From ancient Greek temples to incredibly well-preserved Roman mosaics, not to mention rocky coastlines, sandy beaches and ornate Baroque architecture, Sicily has it all.

Departures March to October 2027

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-sec7**

Pompeii, Capri & the Bay of Naples

TOUR

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS FROM A SELECTION OF REGIONAL AIRPORTS PLUS TRANSFERS

EIGHT DAYS
FROM
£1,499
PER PERSON

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights plus transfers
- Seven nights in three- to four-star accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, with daily breakfast and dinner^
- Services of an experienced tour manager

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

- Four guided tours including Naples, Sorrento, Herculaneum and Pompeii
- Three visits including the Sorrento countryside, the Rufolo Gardens and charming hilltop Ravello
- Take a boat trip to the stunning island of Capri
- Travel along the Amalfi Coast

The Sorrento peninsula and the Bay of Naples are located in one of the most beautiful corners of Europe, attracting visitors for centuries in search of outstanding scenery, tranquillity and wondrous sights from throughout history. Indeed, in the immediate area we have a selection of places to see and visit which stand comparison with almost anywhere in the world.

Departures September and October 2026 and March to November 2027

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-cn**

Lake Garda, Venice and Verona

TOUR

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS FROM A SELECTION OF REGIONAL AIRPORTS PLUS TRANSFERS

EIGHT DAYS
FROM
£1,109
PER PERSON

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights with hotel transfers
- Seven nights in four- to four-star superior accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, with breakfast and dinner^^
- Services of an experienced tour manager

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

- Guided tours of Venice and Verona
- Visits include a selection of villages on Lake Garda, the Dolomites and a local vineyard tour and tasting

This tour is a wonderful blend of some of the finest sights in northern Italy. Firstly, Lake Garda, where waves lap gently on the shingle shoreline, with the snow-capped Dolomite mountains in the background; then Venice, a unique city full of cultural delights such as the Doge's Palace, St Mark's Basilica and the Grand Canal; lastly, Verona, one of the most romantic cities you will ever find.

Departures September and October 2026 and April to October 2027

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-vv**

RIVIERA TRAVEL

ABTA No. V4744

Call now to book

0808 258 8811 thetimes.com/rtravel

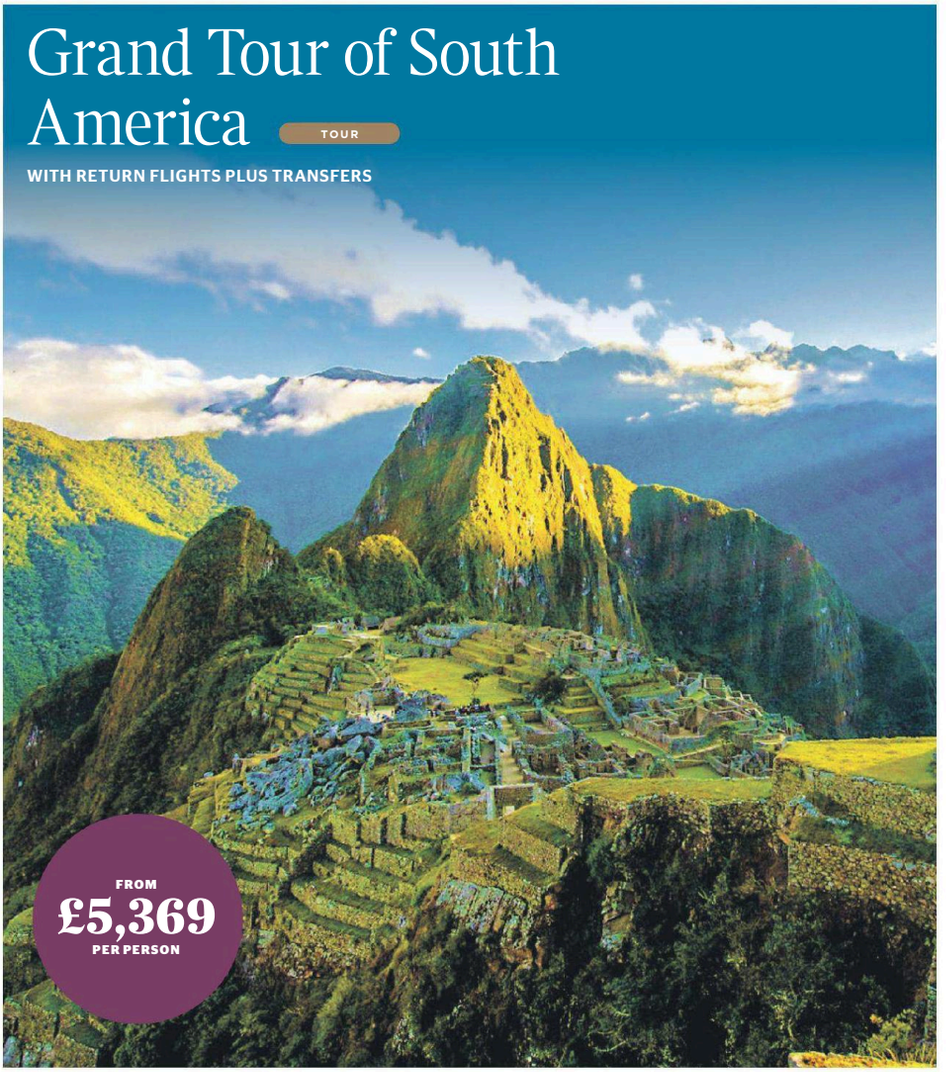
TIMES Travel Partner

Prices are per person, based on two sharing and are correct at time of print. Single rooms are subject to availability at the relevant supplement. Additional entrance costs may apply. All holidays are subject to availability. Images used in conjunction with Riviera Travel. Operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Riviera Tours Ltd, ABTA V4744, ATOL 3430, IATA 91274400, a company wholly independent of News UK. Riviera Travel, New Manor, 328 Wetmore Road, Burton-on-Trent, DE14 1SP. Visit the website for full t&cs. †Save £200pp on selected Riviera Travel European escorted tours departing September 1 to November 30, 2026, valid on new bookings from May 7, 2026, with savings already included and subject to availability. Applies to tour price only (excludes extras), can be combined with other offers, and may be withdrawn or changed at any time. ^Hotel Michelangelo is on a B&B basis. ^^Hotel Kristal and Savoy Palace are offered on a half board basis. The Portici, Antico Borgo and Astoria Park are on a breakfast only basis. The Europa is half board for 2026, however for 2027 it will be offered on a breakfast basis only.

Grand Tour of South America

TOUR

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS PLUS TRANSFERS



FROM **£5,369** PER PERSON

16 DAYS
DEPARTURES NOVEMBER 2026, MAY TO NOVEMBER 2027 AND MARCH TO OCTOBER 2028

Explore the stunning beaches nestled along Brazil's impressive shoreline or witness the spectacular Iguazú Falls. Stand at the top of Sugarloaf Mountain and behold the statue of Christ the Redeemer in all its glory. Discover the real 'stand-out' experiences that encapsulate the culture, history, cuisine, monuments and scenic wonders on this once-in-a-lifetime, adventure.

Price Includes

- Return flights and transfers
- 13 nights in three-to four-star hand-picked hotels
- Daily breakfast, four lunches and one dinner
- Expert Riviera Tour Manager

Your Included Experiences

- Enjoy breathtaking views of Rio de Janeiro from the top of Sugarloaf Mountain and the foot of Christ the Redeemer, and Iguazu Falls from the Argentinian and Brazilian sides
- Guided tours of cosmopolitan Buenos Aires, the 'Paris of South America', and Cusco, the former capital of the Incan empire, now one of South America's most enchanting cities
- Discover Argentina's 'pampas' or plains on our visit to a typical 'estancia'
- Explore the extraordinary Machu Picchu, the fabled 'Lost city of the Incas', on a guided tour
- Tour the Sacred Valley of the Incas and visit Pisac's famed Indian market and temple of Ollantaytambo

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-shp**

Day 1 – Departure
Begin your journey to Lima

Day 2 – Arrival in Lima
Arrive in Lima – capital of Peru - and see some of the city's most famous sights.

Day 3 – Sacred Valley
Fly to Cusco, ancient capital of the Incas, for a two-night stay.

Day 4 – Pisac & Sacred Valley
Explore the Sacred Valley with visits to a colourful local market and impressive fortress.

Day 5 – Machu Picchu
Take a train journey through the rainforest to the legendary Machu Picchu.

Day 6 – Cusco
Visit an ancient sun temple and explore Cusco.

Day 7 – Flight to Buenos Aires
Fly to Buenos Airies, Capital of Argentina.

Day 8 – Pampas Ranch
Visit a local ranch in the Pampas plains where the gaucho's show off their equestrian skills.

Day 9 – Buenos Aires & Tango Sho
Explore the Capital with a tour to the sights.

Day 10 – Fly to Iguazu Falls
Fly to Iguazu Falls and see your first sighting of the mighty falls

Day 11 – Iguazu Falls
See the Iguazu Falls from different viewpoints and ride a jungle train to the head of the falls.

Day 12 – Fly to Rio de Janeiro
Cross into Brazil and fly to Rio de Janeiro.

Day 13 – Rio de Janeiro
Visit the iconic statue of Christ the Redeemer that stand tall over the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Day 14 – Rio de Janeiro
Take a cable car up to the top of Sugarloaf Mountains for spectacular views

Day 15 – Return home
It's time to say goodbye and begin your journey home.

Day 11 – Arrive home

RIVIERA TRAVEL

ABTA No. V4744

Call now to book

0808 258 8811 thetimes.com/rtravel

TIMES Travel Partner

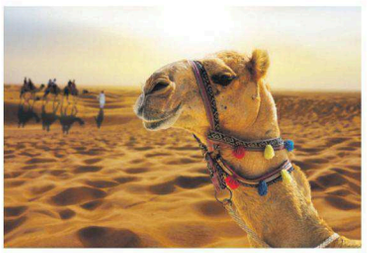
Prices are per person, based on two sharing and are correct at time of print. Single rooms are subject to availability at the relevant supplement. Additional entrance costs may apply. All holidays are subject to availability. Images used in conjunction with Riviera Travel. Operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Riviera Tours Ltd, ABTA V4744, ATOL 3430, IATA 9127440, a company wholly independent of News UK. Riviera Travel, New Manor, 328 Wetmore Road, Burton-on-Trent, DE14 1SP. Visit the website for full t&cs. †10% off all 2027 and 2028 holidays booked before July 30, 2026. Offer subject to availability on individual departures. First come first served. Riviera Travel reserves the right to withdraw or amend this offer at any time. All prices shown include the 10% discount.

Classic Egypt: Cairo, Luxor and Nile River Cruise

CRUISE

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS PLUS TRANSFERS

13 DAYS
FROM
£4,099
PER PERSON



No other place on Earth evokes mystery and wanderlust like Egypt and there's no better way to experience this ancient and fascinating country than on a cruise along the Nile.

Departures September to December 2027

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-eys**

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights plus transfers
- Seven nights on board the five-star Steigenberger Regency, with full board dining on the cruise and breakfast at pre- and post-cruise hotels, plus three lunches and five dinners
- Services of an experienced tour manager

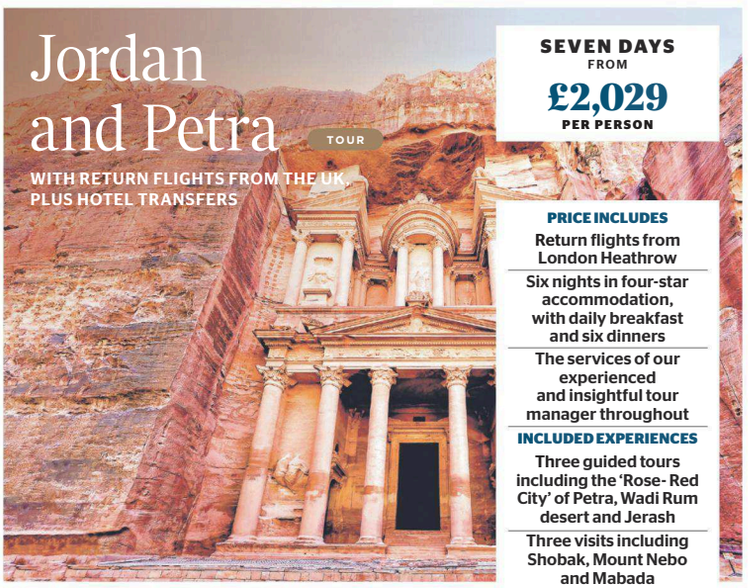
INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

- Visit the Pyramids of Giza and get up close to the enigmatic Sphinx
- Admire the superb collection of artefacts at the Egyptian Museum
- Visit the Temples of Karnak and Luxor
- Wonder at the 'Double Temple' of Kom Ombo, so called as it was dedicated to two gods with separate halls and chambers
- Gaze in awe at the rock cut tombs of the Valley of the Kings on the West Bank of the Nile
- See the sights of Aswan and complete your visit with a felucca ride

Jordan and Petra

TOUR

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS FROM THE UK, PLUS HOTEL TRANSFERS



SEVEN DAYS
FROM
£2,029
PER PERSON

Jordan is a remarkable country, with extraordinary landscapes of red-hued dunes and windswept sandstone, and world-class monuments that include Roman amphitheatres and Crusader castles. From Moses to Alexander the Great, Saladin and our own Lawrence of Arabia, all have left outstanding legacies. Combined with the legendary ancient city of Petra, you'll have a captivating and unforgettable tour.

Departures October 2026 and February to October 2027 & 2028

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-jd**

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights from London Heathrow
- Six nights in four-star accommodation, with daily breakfast and six dinners
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

- Three guided tours including the 'Rose- Red City' of Petra, Wadi Rum desert and Jerash
- Three visits including Shobak, Mount Nebo and Mabada

SIGNATURE TOURS

- Take a drive in a 4x4 through the desert of Wadi Rum and watch the sun set over the sands
- Enjoy a Bedouin tea during our visit to the ancient site of Petra
- Join your fellow travelers on our last night for a drink overlooking the Dead Sea at sunset

Imperial Cities of Morocco

TOUR

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS PLUS TRANSFERS

EIGHT DAYS
FROM
£1,379
PER PERSON

Marrakesh, Rabat, Fez and Meknes – these are the imperial cities of Morocco and all are listed by Unesco as World Heritage sites. Their rich history comes alive in the narrow streets of the medieval medinas and the cool, mosaic lined courtyards of elegant mosques and royal palaces.

Departures October and November 2026, January to December 2027 and February to December 2028

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-im**

PRICE INCLUDES

- Return flights with hotel transfers
- Seven nights in four-to five-star accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, with daily breakfast and seven dinners (two at local restaurants)
- Services of an experienced tour manager

INCLUDED EXPERIENCES

- Guided tours including Marrakesh, Volubilis, Fez, Meknes and Rabat
- Visits including the Jemaa el-Fnaa square, Jardin Majorelle gardens, Meknes, Casablanca and the Hassan II Mosque

RIVIERA TRAVEL

ABTA No. V4744

Call now to book

0808 258 8811 thetimes.com/rtravel

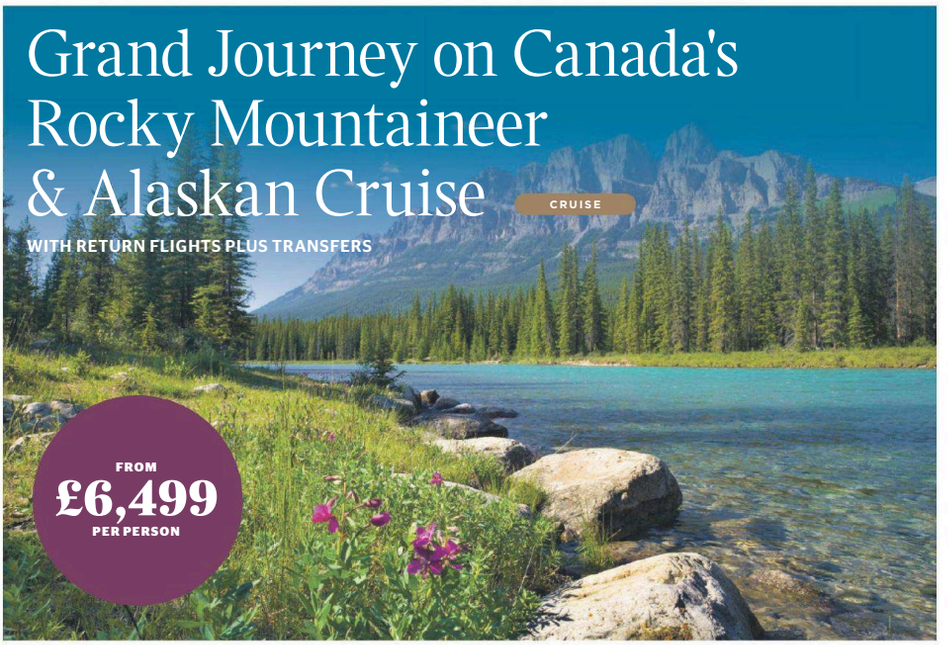
TIMES Travel Partner

Prices are per person, based on two sharing and are correct at time of print. Single rooms are subject to availability at the relevant supplement. Additional entrance costs may apply. All holidays are subject to availability. Images used in conjunction with Riviera Travel. Operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Riviera Tours Ltd, ABTA V4744, ATOL 3430, IATA 9127440, a company wholly independent of News UK. Riviera Travel, New Manor, 328 Wetmore Road, Burton-on-Trent, DE14 1SP. Visit the website for full t&cs. †10% off all 2027 and 2028 holidays booked before July 30, 2026. Offer subject to availability on individual departures. First come first served. Riviera Travel reserves the right to withdraw or amend this offer at any time. All prices shown include the 10% discount.

Grand Journey on Canada's Rocky Mountaineer & Alaskan Cruise

CRUISE

WITH RETURN FLIGHTS PLUS TRANSFERS



FROM **£6,499** PER PERSON

16 DAYS
DEPARTURES MAY TO SEPTEMBER 2027

The magnificent Rocky Mountains are Canada's crowning glory and the Rocky Mountaineer train is the ultimate way to travel through this beautifully rugged terrain. Our tour includes a three-night stay in Vancouver, and from here joins a seven-night, fabulous Alaskan cruise. This combination must surely rank amongst the very finest scenic and wildlife holidays on earth.

Price Includes

- Return scheduled flights with premium economy flight upgrades available at a supplement
- Seven nights in three- to four-star accommodation
- Enjoy impeccable SilverLeaf service on board the Rocky Mountaineer, plus two breakfasts and two lunches, with option to upgrade to GoldLeaf
- Seven nights, full-board Alaskan cruise with Holland America Line
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

Your Included Experiences

- Experience the drama of the Rocky Mountains in unrivalled luxury on the Rocky Mountaineer train
- Travel on the Icefields Parkway, one of the world's most scenic highways, and walk on the 300-metre-thick Athabasca glacier
- Two guided tours including Vancouver and Calgary
- Visit the awe-inspiring Glacier Bay National Park, a World Heritage Site home to actively calving glaciers and humpback whales

To book, visit **thetimes.com/rtravel-cac**

Day 1 – Arrival in Calgary
Begin your journey to Calgary.

Day 2 – Calgary
Start your journey on a guided tour from Calgary across the gently rolling prairies of Alberta.

Day 3 – Banff
Travel along the Icefields Parkway on a breathtaking journey.

Day 4 – Free day in Banff
Spend a day at leisure with some free time in Banff.

Day 5 – Rocky Mountaineer Train
Embark on one of the world's greatest train journeys - the Rocky Mountaineer train.

Day 6 – Vancouver
Continue on the Rocky Mountaineer train passing many iconic natural landmarks as we travel through some of British Columbia's most scenic country before arriving in Vancouver.

Day 7 – Vancouver
Tour the city of Vancouver, stopping at Stanley Park before enjoying a free afternoon.

Day 8 – Embark Koningsdam
Set sail on the Koningsdam, passing below Vancouver's spectacular Lion's Gate suspension bridge.

Day 9 – At sea
Relax as you travel along the famous Inside Passage and ease into shipboard life.

Day 10 – Juneau
Spend the morning cruising to the Tracy Arm Inlet before arriving in Juneau, Alaska's state capital.

Day 11 – Skagway
Prepare for an early start as we arrive in Skagway with a day free to explore, with multiple excursions on offer.

Day 12 – Glacier Bay
Immerse yourself in the magnificent sights as the cruise ship glides into the majestic Glacier Bay National Park.

Day 13 – Ketchikan
Relax as we spend the morning cruising along, before arriving at the small town of Ketchikan.

Day 14 – At sea
Spend the last full day at sea, sailing back through the scenic Inside Passage.

Day 15 – Return home
Arrive back in Vancouver in the morning before saying goodbye and starting the journey home.

Day 16 – Arrive home

RIVIERA TRAVEL

ABTA No. V4744

Call now to book

0808 258 8811 thetimes.com/rtravel

TIMES Travel Partner

Prices are per person, based on two sharing and are correct at time of print. Single rooms are subject to availability at the relevant supplement. Additional entrance costs may apply. All holidays are subject to availability. Images used in conjunction with Riviera Travel. Operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Riviera Tours Ltd, ABTA V4744, ATOL 3490, IATA 9127440, a company wholly independent of News UK. Riviera Travel, New Manor, 328 Wetmore Road, Burton-on-Trent, DE14 1SP. Visit the website for full t&cs.